

*A REVOLUTION IN
EUROPEAN POETRY*

Emery Neff

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EUROPEAN POETRY
1660-1900*

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To
George Bruner Parks

INTRODUCTION

THIS BOOK will trace the course of poetry in the chief European literary languages, French, English, German, and Italian, in the era closest to our own, from 1660 to the twentieth century. The subject is immense. Exhaustive treatment would fill many volumes and would probably rebuff readers of poetry, an art whose essence is brevity and concision. I have therefore been highly selective, in order that the interrelations of the national literatures and civilizations may stand out clearly. I have been interpretive and suggestive, leaving to the reader the exploration of attractive by paths, possibly with the aid of an anthology of world poetry. Attention has been confined to poets and poems of international stature and significance in a changing but fairly homogeneous European society. The basic commonplaces have not been slurred over, for it can scarcely be assumed that a reader familiar with one literature knows his way about in another. But certain familiar critical tags, such as "neo-classical" and "romantic," though convenient for brevity, have been renounced as having no meaning common to the four literatures and as often foreign to the creative intentions of the poets.

This work may contribute to what Balzac called "the genius of admiration, of comprehension, the sole faculty whereby an ordinary man becomes the brother of a great poet." The writer hopes that Americans will be stimulated to think of the significance and future of our national poetry, and to comprehend the present grave crisis in European culture. Perhaps there may be interest for Europeans in the shape which

their national poetry and cultures have assumed in the mind of an American cut off from his European origins by two centuries.

To see European literature through British eyes, is not always to have the best perspective. The distortion is likely to be considerable in regard to the poetry of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, in which the chief movements were French and German and the greatest figure was not British. Yet since English is the first, and because of language barriers frequently the only, European poetry known to them, Americans are disposed to accept English opinion of its relative importance. Nevertheless, Americans, drawing blood and culture from every race in Europe but greatly removed by geography, institutions, and history, should be able, if language barriers were surmounted, to appraise European poetry with detached impartiality. The present moment, when American poetry has achieved independence but has few nationalistic illusions as to its place in world literature, seems propitious for such appraisal.

So far as poetry exists by reason of its content, it can be given much of the international intelligibility of music, painting, and prose literature. Where it subsists through its form, translation is in the strictest sense impossible. As the Italian punning proverb has it, every translator is a traitor. The personal accent of a poet, the resources of his language in rhyme, rhythm, verbal music, and connotation, can rarely be reproduced. Quotations, therefore, have been given in the original. But since acquaintance with four languages may hardly be demanded of the reader, translations to accompany them have been imperative. Translations in rhymed verse, where the original is rhymed, would always have been preferred. But few could be found that were satisfactory, and those that were English poems in their own right were for the most part unrepresentative of the foreign originals because stamped with the personal style and accent of their makers. Prose versions,

though more faithful, seemed inescapably "prose poetry," offensive to lovers of good prose. Consequently, where content is transmissible, I have ventured for the most part the compromise of unrhymed verse of my own composition. These so far as possible line for line versions, as literal as is consistent with English idiom and rhythm, may aid those with imperfect command of a language to readier comprehension of the original. In a few instances I have found rhyme or prose more suitable.

The inception of this book goes back to the first World War, which produced the most cosmopolitan generation of Americans, and to the exceptional postwar opportunities of acquaintance with cultivated Europeans. Dr. Horatio Krans, Director of the American University Union in Paris, Professor Giuseppe Prezzolini, and Professor Frederick Heuser generously offered letters of introduction which opened many hospitable doors.

Entrance into Parisian intellectual and artistic circles was made possible by Professor and Madame Louis Cazamian and by their friend Madame F. Lachelier. Through the hospitality of the Marquise de Saint-Phalle at her Château de Montgoublin I was permitted to know the charming country life of French noble families. In Montpellier I was guided in the French language and literature by Mademoiselle Yvonne Bros de Peuchrodon and Professor Pierre Jourda. The reading of Victor Hugo by the Marquise de Saint-Phalle, of La Fontaine by M. René Schwob, of Racine by Mademoiselle Bros de Peuchrodon, and of Baudelaire and Rimbaud by M. Yves-Gerard le Dantec, was memorable initiation into the delicate art of French verse.

I had the good fortune to learn Italian from the lips of Professor and Signora Giuseppe Prezzolini and to study Leopardi with Signorina Teresa Carbonara. Through Professor Prezzolini I met Italian men of letters in Rome, where Dr. Alessandro de Masi gave invaluable assistance in Italian

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literary history and Dr. Filippo Donini in contemporary Italian poetry. As guest of Conte and Contessa Busi in their villa Travignoli, through whose courtyard John Milton passed on his way to Vallombrosa, I observed the daily life of the Tuscan countryside. One August afternoon our guest Filippo Donini read unforgettably from Leopardi in a sun-baked garden enclosed by the family chapel, peasant cottages, a sloping vineyard, and olive trees.

In the study of British civilization, to which I devoted two books preliminary to the present work, I could always count on the generous aid and draw on the profound knowledge of the late Professor Graham Wallas. Mrs. Eva Marshall and her daughter Dr. Dorothy Marshall drove me about every nook and cranny of Wordsworth's Westmorland and Cumberland, and in their Kentish home showed me the rural life of southern England. For knowledge of other aspects of British life I am indebted to Dr. A. B. C. Wace, Mrs. Joan Woolcombe, Mrs. Alexander Kennedy, Mr. and Mrs. Walter Oakeshot, and the late Mr. and Mrs. Duncan MacGregor. A conversation with Professor Rose Bracher on the green mound of Old Sarum concerning the past and the future of England is deeply impressed in my memory.

For the refurbishing of my German I am deeply grateful to Frau Luise Stabenau, who, with Mr. Frederick Rathert, was most generous with introductions to friends in Germany. In Freiburg-im-Breisgau, where I enjoyed the hospitality of the late Professor Wilhelm van Calker, Professor Friedrich Brie grounded me in the general history of German literature, and Dr. Teut Riese in the era of Goethe. Dr. Wilhelm Schmidt was a delightful guide through the quaint old streets of Frankfurt-am-Main, where Professor Wolfgang Liepe put at my service his special knowledge of Goethe's youth. In Professor Walter Schirmer and his colleagues in the University of Berlin I had again the benefit of the wide and gracious culture of German intellectuals. Gräfin Rehbinder gave me

glimpses into the cosmopolitanism of the Franconian landed aristocracy. One afternoon in Breisach, looking across the swift upper Rhine to white patches revealing the Maginot Line, I felt the profound significance of the barrier between the Latin and the Teutonic civilizations—the *limes* of the Romans—which is a key to much in the following pages.

This book has been read in manuscript by many friends, whose wise criticisms are gratefully acknowledged: by Professor George Parks of Queens College, to whom it is admiringly dedicated, by Dean Edward Hodnett of Newark University, by Mr. Frederick Rathert of New York University, and by my colleagues Professors Angus Burrell, Oscar James Campbell, Henry K. Dick, Charles Everett, Hoxie N. Fairchild, Joseph Wood Krutch, Harrison Ross Steeves, Lionel Trilling, Mark Van Doren, Raymond Weaver, and Ernest Hunter Wright. A debt never to be sufficiently acknowledged I owe to my wife, Dr. Wanda Fraiken Neff, who met by my side the difficulties of travel and of three foreign tongues, and constantly gave me the aid of her historical knowledge, her taste, and her insight into the processes of creative writing.

E. N.

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CONTENTS

Introduction	vii
I. Tradition and Reason	i
II. The Voice of the North	36
III. Joy in Commonalty Spread	87
IV. The Glory That Was Greece	126
V. Nature	157
VI. Wonder	191
VII. This Uneasy Heart of Ours	216
Appendix I: Comparative Chronology	251
Appendix II: Chronological List of the Chief Poets	264
Select Bibliography	267
Index	273

Chapter One

TRADITION AND REASON

WHEN LOUIS XIV, on assuming personal rule in 1661, obliged the nobles of France to pass most of the year at court, he provided men of letters with one of the best audiences in the history of the world. Caught in the silken net of ceremonial, the turbulent feudal lords who had fought tenaciously against the encroaching royal power were transformed into courtiers. No longer free to manage their estates, excluded from government posts, barred from gainful occupations by the code of their class and exercising their hereditary profession of arms only at the bidding of the king, they found outlet for their abundant energies in social amusements and duties or in artistic and intellectual pursuits. The long hours of waiting in groups in palace antechambers to perform infinitely subdivided personal services to their Sovereign, their Gallic communicativeness turned to account by developing the art of conversation and the study of character. The court, originally the realm's general headquarters and council of war, became a school of graceful living.

The social arts had already been developing in the salons of noblewomen in Paris. From the rude military court of Louis's grandfather, Henri IV, the Marquise of Rambouillet had retired to disseminate among her friends the refined manners of Renaissance Italy acquired from her Roman mother. Of the salons which followed her lead, those of Mademoiselle de

Scudéry, Madame de Lafayette and Madame de Sablé were the most influential. The group about Madame de Sablé enjoyed putting into epigrammatic form generalizations concerning human nature. The most profound, those of the Duke de la Rochefoucauld, were published as *Moral Maxims* in 1665. The life of La Rochefoucauld was typical of the change that came over his class. His youth was full of romantic adventure and intrigue in the rebellions against the royal power. In his forties, defeated and ill from wounds, he turned his restless mind to tracing from wide and bitter experience the devious disguises of self-interest. The shutting off of action had opened for him a fascinating inner world. In similar voyages of psychological discovery women found themselves on an equal footing with men. Feminine intuition strained the resources of the language to describe the complex relations of the sexes in cultivated society. Salons plunged into endless discussion of synonyms, in which rude approximations to elusive meanings yielded to graceful turns of phrase. Grammar as a means of precise communication offered an absorbing game to the leisure class.

A lover of good conversation and genuinely interested in literature, the young King Louis encouraged these indirect results of a policy that had been chiefly political. He had intended primarily to make sure of the subservience of the nobles by keeping them under his eyes while giving executive posts to men of the middle class whom he could more safely trust. He also had wished to impress Europe with the splendor of some six thousand satellites revolving about their "Sun-King" in the Louvre or the great Château in course of construction at Versailles. Recognizing, like his father's minister Richelieu, the value to the throne of dependent and well disposed men of letters, he lavished favors on the French Academy, which the Cardinal had taken under his protection in 1635. At its meetings writers sat with great lords and bishops, to prepare a grammar and a dictionary that would establish canons of polite and correct usage. To the prizes awarded by the Academy to books

of outstanding merit the king added pensions and sinecures for distinguished authors; the names of Corneille, Racine, Molière and Boileau adorned his first pension list of 1663. Louis thought of himself as in the tradition of Augustus; and indeed rarely since Augustan Rome had such munificent patronage been rivaled. Innumerable were the odes called forth by the military triumphs of the sixteen-sixties and -seventies which made rich and populous France the dominant European power; innumerable the dedicatory epistles to the Sun-King and to nobles who followed the royal example of patronage.

Poets as well as the king were emulous of Imperial Rome. Inheriting the Renaissance reverence for the ancients, they found the majesty, urbanity, and discipline of the Romans more congenial than the Greeks, who for all their sublimity were too unequal, too individualistic, too often racily close to the multitude. Seventeenth-century France gave Homer lip service, but like Renaissance Italy instinctively preferred Virgil. Latin, the mother of the French tongue, was the staple of instruction; Greek was not taught in the universities nor by the Jesuits, who dominated elementary and secondary education.

The Latin classics, besides, were prized as deposits of the ripe and winnowed wisdom concerning human nature for which the salons had whetted curiosity. Living in public, where individual eccentricities must be sacrificed to social convenience, the aristocracy sought truths concerning human behavior which would hold for all times and all places. That such truths could be discovered, they had been assured by the most popular philosopher of the time. In his *Discourse on Method* (1637) René Descartes had assumed it self-evident that "good sense or reason is by nature equal in all men"; existing inequalities were merely results of the wrong application of reason. The proper method of thought was the geometric, which proceeded from evidence perceived "so clearly and distinctly as to exclude all ground for doubt" through analysis and synthesis to comprehensive and sure generalizations. Descartes's

words had authority, for, by the invention of analytical geometry, he had been solving problems that had baffled the best minds of antiquity. He was the first philosopher to write, not in Latin for the learned, but in French for the educated layman also. Applications of his method to the study of human conduct had become a social pastime, like amateur psychoanalysis in our day. Since man was a reasonable being, his emotions could be traced through steps ordered by intellectual decisions; the map of his inner world should exhibit the precision and regularity of the rectangles and circles in which Le Nôtre was designing the formal gardens of Versailles. The aristocracy and the upper middle class of officials and professional men who followed its lead were an eager audience for literary works analyzing conduct. To them, the proper study of mankind was man.

In verse, this study took the forms of satire, epistles, and drama. Drama was most popular, for it offered problems of behavior with entertainment for the court, obeying the Horatian maxim that poetry should instruct while giving pleasure. Louis and the arbiters of taste among his courtiers preferred tragedy to comedy as more befitting the majesty of the realm. According to Aristotle, whom they accepted as the infallible literary law-giver, the chief tragic characters must be of noble rank. French taste added the stipulations that there be no admixture of comedy, and that all characters express themselves in the "noble style," purged of familiar and base words. Thus the tragic poet found himself restricted to about a third of the already limited vocabulary of the *Dictionary* of the French Academy, whose standard of "good usage," by excluding technical, provincial, slightly outmoded, and popular words, was thinning by some two-thirds the richness of sixteenth-century French. Finally, the playwright was expected to respect the unities of time, place, and action, of which the two former had been derived from Aristotle by Italian and French Renaissance commentators. Tragedy, thus conceived, mirrored the taste of

Louis's court: traditional, authoritarian, rationalistic, rather literal-minded.

To Jean Racine, these conditions were not cramping, but rather conducive to the fullest play of his genius. Like his audience, he satisfied a need for verisimilitude by limiting plots to one place and, as closely as possible, to the time required to act them. The three unities exactly suited his choice of a single situation already far advanced toward a crisis when the curtain was raised. He shared the passion of his audience for symmetry and logic, its distaste for irrelevance and ornament. His characters of noble rank, Greek, Roman, Oriental, could with propriety speak the language of high civilization the court required. His dialogue, the quintessence of salon conversation, was a fabric of delicate distinctions of emotion and thought, of hints and suggestions which the mature and the sophisticated could divine. His plots revolved about the chief interests of an aristocracy: love, affairs of state, intrigue for precedence and power.

In one important respect, however, Racine departed from the pattern. He had not been educated by the Jesuits, but by the Jansenists, the Puritans of France. In them he had observed nonconformity, ascetic self-control, solitary meditation. The Greek they taught him, especially in his favorite Euripides, displayed the force of elemental passions. When he broke with his severe mentors to go to court, he divined those passions beneath the polished manner of nobles so recently plucked from anarchy, just as he felt them in his own heart, hypersensitive, emulous, pitiless, yet noble. The tension of violent feelings within the impersonality and rationality of social decorum and within the confines of the approved dramatic form is the main-spring of Racine's plays. Characters who have been speaking with ceremonial politeness or subtle innuendo, when stung by jealousy or hurt in pride bare their souls with appalling directness. In Racine's first success, *Andromaque* (1667), Hermione, true daughter of Helen of Troy, reveals a colossal egoism which,

wounded, drives her to instigate the assassination of the man she loves. *Britannicus* (1669) unfolds the process whereby Nero becomes a monster; Phèdre strives nobly but vainly against an inheritance of abnormal sexuality.

Those familiar with English drama of his century come upon Racine with amazement at the economy of structure, the sophistication of motivations, the refined simplicity of style. He seems unconscious of an audience in never raising his voice, nor making an obvious gesture. In self-effacing fidelity to his themes he disdains verbal splendor, figures of speech, lyric flights. There is not an otiose phrase, nothing left at loose ends. Each line so adheres to its context that it is difficult to quote a short passage which is self-explanatory. His seemingly effortless verses fully communicate feeling and thought; the standard Alexandrine becomes musical, flexible, responsive to every light and shade. Tremendous passions expressed in the limited vocabulary Racine permitted himself have an effect of deliberate understatement quite as powerful as Elizabethan hyperbole. Gradations of feeling are so carefully marked, characters and situations so nicely balanced, that a scene or an act is a faultless geometric demonstration. But reason is not permitted to have full sway with human nature as in the tragedies of his predecessor Corneille, even though Racine's characters are always aware of their departure from its dictates.

The most purely Racinian of the plays is *Bérénice* (1670), built from one sentence of the historian Tacitus: "Titus, who loved Queen Berenice and was even thought to have promised her marriage, immediately upon becoming Emperor sent her away from Rome against his will and hers." Here is material for tragedy without bloodshed, violence or villainous intrigue. All events are within the heart. An emperor and a queen sacrifice their mutual love to the law of the Roman people that its ruler must not marry a foreigner, and to its traditional hatred of the royal title. The tortured hesitations of Titus, the alternating

hope and fear of Bérénice, before the dictate of reason that a ruler put public good before private inclination, have the "majestic sadness" Racine admired in the Dido episode of the *Aeneid*. The Racinian tragedies, compact in form and explosive in content, wildly passionate and rigorously logical, wed triumphantly art and nature. More completely civilized than any drama hitherto, they are the flower of that "spirit of society" which Voltaire was to single out as the peculiar contribution of the "century of Louis the Fourteenth."

The other representative poet of the era was Nicolas Boileau. He excelled in satire and the mock heroic, literary types requiring common sense and a dexterous wrist. No one could impale folly more neatly upon the point of a verse nor reveal more vividly the chasm between the grand style and the petty concerns of daily life. *Le Lutrin* (1674, 1683), which relates in the trappings of the *Aeneid* and the *Iliad* the quarrel of two prelates over the placing of a reading desk in the choir of the Sainte Chapelle in Paris, excited countless imitations in an era tired of the heroic extravagance of the French Renaissance and the fanaticism of the Reformation.

Boileau was still more influential as a critic, at a time when creative writers obeyed critical precept to a degree hard to imagine today. The prestige of criticism had come from the recognition in the previous century of the enormous superiority of the Greek and Roman classics to the literature extant in French. In despair before such powers of observation, poets felt more secure in looking through the eyes of the ancients than directly through their own. Hence their great respect for the generalizations upon the art of writing made by the critics of antiquity and their eagerness to profit by the experience of the Romans in imitating the Greeks. Most of Boileau's critical contemporaries, like Rapin, Bouhours and Le Bossu, were Catholic ecclesiastics, who unconsciously transferred to the *Poetics* of Aristotle the authority they accorded him in scholas-

tic philosophy, while adding a clerical emphasis on the moral and didactic purpose of literature. Boileau's taste, more independent and broader than theirs, allowed the example of contemporary writers more weight beside that of the ancients. His versified *Art poétique* (1674), in surveying the types of poetry recognized by antiquity, gives the traditional pre-eminence to the epic and the dramatic; but if he allows no rivals to Homer and Virgil, his precepts regarding the drama derive from Racine and Molière even more than from the Greeks. Though overtones of feeling and imagination escaped him, Boileau could not praise too highly Racine's form and style, his adherence to verisimilitude. In satire, he recommended the contemporary respect for modesty and refinement as proper restraint upon antique and Renaissance verve. The lyric, remote from Boileau's temperament, received only perfunctory treatment, largely borrowed from Horace's *Ars poetica*.

Boileau's aesthetic principles, like those of Horace, are predominantly negative. The poet is admonished to avoid the incredible and the extravagant, superfluous detail, low, vulgar and provincial diction; to blot and polish without stint. In surveying the history of French verse Boileau passes disdainfully over the Middle Ages and the great sixteenth-century lyricist Ronsard to arrive/contentedly at/Malherbe/ who in the first quarter of the seventeenth century, by systematizing prosody, "reduced the Muse to binding rules." Where his principles are positive, they emphasized, like Descartes, the intellectual virtues: common sense, clarity and proportion. "Love reason, then," he recommends, "let good sense always accord with rhyme." Like Aristotle, he admits the ugly and the horrible as materials of poetry; he agrees with Horace that a poet is born, not made. He admits, furthermore, that his doctrines are not infallible:

Quelquefois dans sa course un esprit vigoureux,
Trop reserré par l'art, sort des règles prescrites,
Et de l'art même apprend à franchir leurs limites.

/ Sometimes a vigorous spirit, too restrained in its course by art, departs from the prescribed rules, and learns even from art itself to overstep their bounds.* /

Boileau's discussion of minor types of poetry did not touch one of the most original and distinguished of contemporary productions, the *Fables* of La Fontaine, which had begun to appear in 1668. Was it that the critic deplored the popularity of verse so discordant with the orthodox tradition? For the convention permitting animals to speak flouted not only verisimilitude but also Descartes's doctrine that they were automatic machines. Besides, the human beings most frequently associated with animals in these fables were of the common and baser sort, woodcutters and tillers of the soil groaning under the taxes that maintained the leisure of the aristocracy. Such men handled objects like pots and pigs, which La Fontaine mentioned without elegant periphrasis. He also used provincial expressions and revived words from mediaeval and Renaissance writers, including Rabelais. Departing from the standardized versification of Malherbe, he mirrored his meaning in free rhythms as light and shifting as air. Asides and lyric flights forgot the decorum of impersonality. And into La Fontaine's verses came sights and sounds of nature which preoccupation with humanity excluded from most contemporary writing. Like his contemporaries, he sought general truths about mankind, yet instead of following Boileau's advice to the comic playwright:

Étudiez la cour et connaissez la ville,

Study the court and be acquainted with the town,

he found them in the proverbial wisdom of the common people.

Even Boileau's idol Molière did not confine himself to city and court vocabulary and sentiment. *Le Misanthrope* (1666), a comedy which approaches the verge of tragedy in Alceste's unavailing protest against the smothering of scrupulous frank-

* All translations are the author's.

ness and spontaneous feeling under the decorums of "good society," opposes the rude, naïve popular ballad to the artificial conceits of amatory society verse.

The main current of French poetry, however, continued to flow in the channels Boileau had charted, and deepened them in the following century. By 1700, when the great writers of the reign were no longer living, or like Boileau had practically completed their work, France was aware that she had produced classics which could vie with those of the age of Augustus. The rules derived from their artistic practice by Boileau, "the legislator of Parnassus," were considered sacrosanct canons of the only correct taste. Writers of the eighteenth century were to sap the religious, moral, and political foundations on which Louis XIV had reared his grandeur; but iconoclasts like Voltaire were conservatives in aesthetic matters, bowing to Boileau and idolizing Racine.

Nevertheless, the content of poetry changed steadily though imperceptibly with the character of its audience. By 1708, Louis XIV's imperialism was checked, and the French, who had overrun the Rhineland, Flanders, and northern Italy, were with difficulty defending their own borders against a coalition alarmed by his ambitions. The aging king had no longer time or money to encourage the arts. His successors, Louis XV and Louis XVI, were indifferent to literature. The place of the monarchy and the court as arbiters of taste was assumed by the Parisian salons, into which entered an increasing admixture of the upper middle class, officials, lawyers, financiers. The nobles of eighteenth-century France were of different fiber from their vigorous and factious grandfathers and fathers whom court life had curbed and refined. They had never known responsibility and independent action. They had seen military glory fade and were no longer dazzled by pomp. A continual social existence had reduced individuals to a common pattern. Strong emotions and extreme opinions were repressed; an enthusiast,

un exalté, was scorned by the well-bred. For every situation had been evolved *une phrase consacrée*, an appropriate standard expression. Even family relations were formal. Behavior, become an elaborate code, must be learned very early to appear spontaneous. A child of seven or eight, dressed like an adult, could make a graceful bow and a complimentary reply. The engaging French politeness was the wonder of Europe.

Continual ceremony and amusement had brought boredom and satiety that must be dispelled by novel sensations. Restlessness and jaded sensuality may be read in the evolution about 1730 of the grandiose, severe, rather cold Louis XIV style of decoration into the rococo, so named from the pebbles imbedded in the stucco of vestibule fountains and artificial grottoes. The rococo sought variety, exoticism, and soft elegance. Prismatic candelabra and furnishings of ravishingly delicate colors were reflected in mirrored walls set with niches for porcelain vases and figurines. The ends of the earth, China, Persia, India, were ransacked for designs and shades; ingenuity exhausted itself in the invention of arabesques. The geometric regularity of Versailles was softened by the winding paths and rose gardens of the Trianon; Cupids and Graces displaced busts of Roman emperors. Exclusion from practical affairs, exemption from taxes, destroyed in the aristocracy the sense of relative values. Nobles composed gay epigrams on shameful national defeats like Rossbach, but made a serious business of trifles; of gestures, turns of phrase, games, dress. The fashions of the wig and of the hat carried under the arm were symbolic of a functionless and artificial existence. The salons even tolerated discussion of political, economic, and irreligious ideas subversive of the social structure upon which their privileges rested.

The hardening influence in the lives of the aristocrats was intellectual. Mental pleasure was the least satiable, science the one enthusiasm not bad form. What Descartes had been for the salons of the seventeenth century, two Englishmen, Locke and Newton, were for those of the eighteenth. The prediction of

the motions of the planets in Isaac Newton's *Principia* (1687) had shown the relevance of the human intellect not only to the earth, but to the universe. The functioning of nature, natural law, proved to be a system of mathematical relations. The order and regularity dear to the seventeenth century thus extended their borders indefinitely. John Locke was hailed as the Newton of the inner world; his *Essay concerning the Human Understanding* (1690) revealed natural laws of the mind. What had been treated amateurishly by men of letters was given scientific form. After Locke and Newton, Nature became a term to describe the established order in the universe and within man. What was rational was natural. Nature and Reason, the watchwords of the eighteenth century, were different aspects of the same thing.

Introduced into France by Voltaire after his exile in England, Locke and Newton began their vogue in the salons with the seventeen-thirties. Formidable mathematics did not daunt the women. The Italian Algarotti's popularization, *Newtonianism for Ladies* (1737; in French translation, 1752), was followed in 1756 by Madame du Châtelet's translation of the *Principia*. The uncompromising logic of the French mind drew extreme inferences from which the English had hesitated. Helvétius and Condillac interpreted Locke as materialism. Questions of moral choice, which in the previous century had inevitably involved religion, were reduced to calculation of consequences in terms of pleasure and pain. From the system of the pious Newton the occasional interference of the Deity was removed as an excrescence. Man as part of a universal mechanism of matter and motion, automatic and eternal, was the theme of La Mettrie's *L'Homme machine* (1748) and the Baron d'Holbach's *Système de la nature* (1770). The triumphant analytic method of mathematical physics began to be applied with equal boldness to economic and political institutions hitherto accepted without question. Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, and Turgot laid foundations for social science in

spite of royal and ecclesiastical censorship. The ideal social type of the seventeenth century, *l'honnête homme*, loyal to church and king, distrustful of excess, a connoisseur of the arts, was succeeded by the *philosophe*, scientifically informed, sceptical of the "prejudices" of ages of faith, reasonably Epicurean in his pleasures, Stoic in renunciation of personal immortality in a world-machine.

The cultural dominance of science disturbed the equilibrium of tradition and reason which had produced the literary masterpieces of the early reign of Louis XIV. The scales were tipped against writing as an art by the disposition to regard language solely as a vehicle for the communication of ideas. For this purpose abstract terms, as much as possible without color or emotional associations, best served. Those to whom truth was paramount thus looked askance at poetry as the art of concealing lies by adornment. The brilliant young Montesquieu in his satirical *Persian Letters* (1721) called poets "authors whose trade is to put shackles on good sense and to stifle reason under ornament. . . . Here are the lyricists, whom I despise . . . who make of their art a harmonious extravagance." The kind of verse most approved was didactic, especially that popularizing science and its applications, which avoided by periphrasis the ban on technical terms in poetry. The twelve-syllable couplet, or Alexandrine, was trained to bear a complete thought, often neatly subdivided by the rhyme or by the caesura, which must be in the exact middle of the verse. The leading playwright, Voltaire, incorporated in the traditional form of Racine propaganda against beliefs and institutions. The vocabulary and style of verse had become so nearly identical with those of prose that his contemporaries were unaware that it was in prose, and not poetry, that Voltaire's genius lay. Houdar de la Motte, possibly with his tongue in his cheek, published *Odes* (1707) in prose, with a preface professing astonishment at "the ridiculousness of men having consciously invented an art to make it impossible to express exactly what they wanted to

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say." These odes are scarcely inferior to those of the most celebrated contemporary lyricist, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, which have the outward and visible signs of poetry without a scintilla of its spirit. Likewise critics of the next generation lost sight of the distinction between science and art in claiming for their rules the inflexibility of mathematical formulae. The mathematician d'Alembert, permanent secretary of the French Academy and a leading contributor to the famous *Encyclopaedia* that was enlisting against the "prejudices" the advanced thinkers of the time, declared that "poetry adds to this merit [that of expressing thought] the merit of a difficulty overcome. The less we soften the rigor of our poetic laws, the greater will be the glory in surmounting them. . . . A poet is a man whom we oblige to walk gracefully with fetters on his feet." Voltaire said more emphatically that he must "dance the tightrope in fetters."

Meanwhile the prestige of ancient art was declining with the growing conviction of the French that their culture had become superior to that of antiquity. Charles Perrault's poem "The Century of Louis the Great," read before the Academy in 1687, precipitated a long "Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns" by enumerating the offenses of the Greek and Latin classics against the refinement attained in an enlightened era. In 1714, the year before Louis XIV's death, La Motte produced a verse translation of the *Iliad*, neatly reduced to twelve cantos by the elimination of repetitions, digressions and prolix descriptions, and purged of low vocabulary, of barbarous and unseemly behavior of gods and men. Achilles and Agamemnon, no longer bandying insults, are tamed for introduction into the salons. Significantly, the version was not direct from the Greek, but from a French prose translation. Voltaire has described the supercivilized for whom La Motte made his adaptation: "This little exclusive band called 'good society,' rich, well-born, educated, polite, is the flower of the human race. For it great men have labored; it is the giver of reputation." For all this

charm and intelligence, good society had serious emotional deficiencies, the result of its highly specialized and parasitic character, that made it an imperfect audience not only for Hômer, but for the contemporary verse over which it wielded such power. Exemption from the struggle for existence, lack of strong private affections, of patriotism, religious zeal, reverie and meditation, made it almost impervious to lyricism. The verse it admired did not go deeper than graceful compliment, sparkling epigram, or amorous gallantry usually coming to some dexterous "point" of worldly wisdom.

Yet near the Trianon stand the thatched cottages of the toy village in which Marie Antoinette and her maids of honor played at being milkmaids; symbolic of the vague longing of the privileged classes for the simple life, for bread wrung from nature by toil. In the seventeen-sixties and -seventies, Jean-Jacques Rousseau's attacks on inequality and artificiality came into vogue, and sensibility, even floods of tears, was socially approved. But these escapes hardened at once into ritual; were fads to avoid boredom, little more. Dorat's imitations of Ovid's *Heroides*, the poetic response to the vogue of "sensibility," are meretricious sensationalism. The cry of "back to nature" was satisfied by the frigid descriptive verse of Saint-Lambert and the Abbé Delille, scarcely relieved by a concrete image. The path to emotional sincerity seemed lost.

Thus it came about that generations which flocked to the opera newly imported from Italy and showed exquisite taste in interiors and in shades of brocaded clothing tolerated verse deaf to rhythm and melody, blind to color. Eighteenth-century French poetry is a winter landscape without sun, sharp in outline but soundless except for occasional scraping of bare branches in bleak wind. Lyric geniuses continued to be born, as the prose of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and of Chateaubriand attests. But when even they composed poetry, numbness seized their souls, as if there were something fatal in the associations of verse form. The standardized poetic product survived the

overthrow of the aristocracy by the Revolution and the parvenu régime of Napoleon. For almost a century and a quarter, from 1700 to 1820, France, with splendid achievements in prose, in architecture, in interiors and in painting, scarcely enters the annals of world-poetry.

This withering of poetry in France was but the extreme of the impoverishment of its emotional and imaginative content throughout Europe. In that cosmopolitan era the audience for literature had a homogeneity across national boundaries difficult to comprehend at the present time of rampant nationalism and warring economic and political ideologies. In England, Italy, and Germany, as in France, readers of poetry were an aristocracy with a uniform taste and code of manners, and a dependent and imitative middle class. The European economy was agricultural; the intellectual climate, that of Descartes, Boileau, Locke, and Newton. Religious differences were being reduced by rationalism and by disgust at fanaticism. Race meant less than class solidarity, and the dynastic wars aroused little patriotic sentiment. Literature would have been aristocratic, traditional and rational, even if the French language and literature had not crossed national boundaries. That they did so, was decisive for European poetry of the first three quarters of the eighteenth century.

The care with which France had forged her language, more than the prestige of her arms, caused French to displace Latin as the language of diplomacy, beginning with the Treaty of Rastadt in 1714. As precise as Latin, and with the advantages of a living tongue, it also became to a large extent the medium of scholarship and science. Indispensable for the subtleties of social relations and for the vocabulary of luxury, it was the international aristocratic speech. Well-born youths from every corner of Europe went to Paris to polish off their education, and returned to build and to decorate after French designs. The greatness of Corneille, Molière, and Racine gave the taste of Boileau widespread authority.

In England, Italy, and Germany, the extent of this cultural invasion differed according to the resistance of the indigenous literary and social tradition.

England, first invaded, was stoutest to resist. In 1660, the year before Louis XIV began his personal rule, his cousin Charles II was recalled from exile to rule a nation tired, like France, of civil war and desirous of order. Half-French (his mother was a daughter of Henri IV), and having spent a large part of his long exile in France, he brought home with him French taste, shared by his loyal nobles who had followed him to the Continent. Reopening the theatres closed by the Puritans, for the entertainment of his court he encouraged plays imitative of the Parisian successes. The audience was so narrowly aristocratic that economy obliged the two original companies to unite in 1682, whereas Elizabethan London had at times supported seven theatres attracting all classes, from the apprentice to the lord. Poetic dramas observing the three unities and the noble style, although supported by most critical opinion and by the example of Corneille and Racine, proved in the long run unavailing against the native form and style of Shakespeare. But their brief abandonment of blank verse for rhyme, under the influence of French practice, helped establish the vogue of the "heroic" pentameter couplet, whose possibilities were demonstrated by John Dryden.

The Stuart monarchy, by no means so securely established as its French exemplar, enlisted Dryden's pen not only for "heroic" plays, but also for political satire and religious polemic. Dryden's taste, formed by the study of the Latin classics at Cambridge, was largely in accord with Boileau, whose *Art poétique* he collaborated in translating and adapting to the English literary scene in 1680-81. Science, which his royal master Charles had encouraged by chartering in 1662 the Royal Society for "promoting physico-mathematicall experimentall

learning," reinforced the abstract and rationalistic temper of his mind. Dryden's satires, especially *Absalom and Achitophel* (1681) directed against the supporters of the abortive rebellion of Charles's natural son, the Duke of Monmouth, excelled in concise portraiture of psychological types, in which merciless accuracy joined with good-natured contempt. *Religio laici* (1682) and *The Hind and the Panther* (1687) brought religious controversy into the realm of poetry by their structural beauty, pellucid clarity, and trick of disguising as narrative any bulk of argumentative exposition. For the purposes of satire and didacticism/Dryden found the pentameter couplet, indigenous since Chaucer but generally employed loosely, with run-on lines, partly formed to his hand by Denham's antithetical concision and Waller's smoothness/A consummate rhetorician, he fashioned it into superiority even to the French Alexandrine as a vehicle for all sorts of intellectual loads. He contrived to make every statement sound important by throwing emphatic words to the end of the line, closed usually by a pause and masculine rhyme, by strengthening the caesura for antithesis, and by fashioning his sentences to coincide with the verse pattern/In his translation of *Virgil's Works* (1697), Dryden's conception of the grand style of antiquity as/a combination of polysyllabic elegance with generalized epithets/resulted in something similar to the French "noble style." But his satiric and didactic manners have the racy vigor of his Elizabethan and Jacobean countrymen, whom he recognized as a "giant race, before the flood" (of the Civil Wars). He was proud to find in his native language possibilities of superiority to French:

Their tongue, enfeebled, is refined too much
And like pure gold, it yields at every touch;
Our sturdy Teuton yet will art obey,
More fit for manly thought, and strengthened with alloy.*

* Alloy.

The lines quoted are in one respect not characteristic of Dryden, for he is chary of figures. Like his French contemporaries, he relies upon inevitable statement.

Charles's imitation of the absolutism and Catholicism of the great Louis was tempered with nice calculation of the lengths he dared go with the independent temper and Protestant inclination of his subjects. He confessed that he had no desire "to go on his travels again." For want of this caution, three years after his death his brother and successor James II lost the throne to Louis's implacable enemy, the Dutch William. But this Revolution of 1688, ranging England with the powers allied against France, did not affect English receptivity to French taste, which paradoxically increased. To some degree, this may be explained by the arrival in England, after Louis had revoked in 1685 the Edict of Nantes, of French Protestant refugees bringing with them an enthusiasm for the national literature, from which many English had fought shy because they felt it tinged with Catholicism. But to a much greater extent this was due to the cosmopolitanism of the British aristocracy and the willingness of the middle class to follow its lead in matters of taste. What, under Charles and James, had been a foreign importation largely confined to the court now spread to the merchants and bankers of London, rapidly outstripping its Dutch allies in the race for the commercial supremacy of the world. The "wild gallants" who had been the boon companions of the Merry Monarch had, for all their cleverness, too little of the refinement, the moral and religious seriousness of Louis's court to encourage a Racine. Charles II did not sponsor an Academy of Letters on the French model to parallel his Royal Society. The native English reverence for the classics flowered in a poet hostile to the court: the contemporary classics rivaling those of Louis's reign were *Paradise Lost* (1667), a triumph in the epic, which the French put first among poetic types without being able to manage it, and *Sam-*

son Agonistes (1671), a stricter following of the form of the Greek play than Boileau was to recommend. The Revolution of 1688, in weakening the monarchy and transferring power to nobles whom Whig politics and Protestantism allied with the commercial classes, brought together the admirers of Milton and the admirers of the French into a wider and solidier audience for poetry. The middle class gave literature a sobriety and a balance akin to that of the heyday of Louis XIV. By leading the coalition that checked Louis's conquests and threw him back within his own boundaries, England became by 1714 the chief European power. The first Northern nation to arrive at that eminence, she had to look southward for examples of how to bear greatness decorously. Like France, she aspired to be Augustan.

The representative poet of Augustan England, Alexander Pope, was a London merchant's son, whom Roman Catholic faith made especially sympathetic with authority in literature. In most eras it would have been strange for a spirited young poet to make his first mature work an *Essay on Criticism* (1711) recommending an even more stringent deference to tradition than its model, Boileau. Setting out apparently in the British empirical manner by advising the poet to

First follow Nature . . .
At once the source, and end, and test of Art,

Pope veers immediately to paraphrase the Jesuit Rapin's characterization of Aristotle's *Poetics* as "la nature mise en méthode et le bon sens réduit en principes" with the couplet:

These rules of old, discover'd, not devised,
Are Nature still, but Nature methodized.

He goes on to tell how Virgil, though first looking at the world with his own eyes, soon found that "Nature and Homer were . . . the same," and thenceforth had written as if Homer's interpreter, Aristotle, "o'erlook'd each line." Admitting

that sometimes the ancients by disregarding rules could "snatch a grace beyond the reach of Art," unlike Boileau, Pope adds a warning: "Moderns, beware!" Moderns may avail themselves of that license only for which there is ancient precedent, for the ancients were flawless in taste. The role of the moderns is to refine with Horace's file commonplaces that need only clarity of statement to strike the reader as his own reminiscences:

What oft was thought, but ne'er so well express'd;
Something whose truth convinced at sight we find,
That gives us back the image of our mind.

The young poet recalls that until lately his countrymen

Fierce for the liberties of wit, and bold,
. . . still defied the Romans, as of old;

but now they have seen the wisdom of succumbing to the great Mediterranean tradition whose critical roll he calls from Aristotle, Horace, Quintilian, and Longinus through the Italian Vida to Boileau, who "still in right of Horace sways."

For his own compositions Pope took Boileau and Dryden as chief models; Dryden for style and Boileau for types. The poet Walsh had told him that "there was one way left of excelling; for though we [English] had several great poets, we never had any one great poet that was *correct*." Pope seized the opportunity, both by scrupulous observance of critical rules and by the utmost refinement of style. He took from Dryden's hands "the easy vigor of a line" and turned it from the manipulation of heavy weights to delicate miniature work. The couplet became a unit in and for itself, as well as a link in a chain.

Boileau offered models in the types best suited to Pope's powers: the essay in verse, the epistle, the mock-epic, satire. Mock-heroic after the manner of *Le Lutrin* was ideal for an author steeped in tradition and pretending neither to origi-

nality nor to irrepressible emotion. In *The Rape of the Lock* (1712), the perfect rococo poem, the stateliness and felicity of Virgil orchestrate the inane glitter of leisure-class frivolity; Othello's primitive roar for the handkerchief is the accompaniment for a court belle's shrill demand for her stolen curl. Style seems to have a life of its own, independent of content, in passages like:

When rich China vessels, fall'n from on high,
In glittering dust and painted fragments lie!

English poetry, unlike English science and philosophy, was little known on the Continent. The Tory politician Lord Bolingbroke, returned from eight years' exile in France, urged Pope to give it international currency by expounding Newton and Locke in a style impeccable by French standards. This was achieved by *An Essay on Man* (1733), which surpassed all didactic poems of the century by adding to French clarity and ease the more concrete English vocabulary serving a delicate sensibility:

Die of a rose in aromatic pain.

The spider's touch, how exquisitely fine,
Feels at each thread, and lives along the line.

But its content discloses certain limitations in Pope's interpretation of the reigning ideals of dispassionate reason and the golden mean. The declared purpose to "vindicate the ways of God to man" suffers from the inescapable comparison with Milton when Pope blandly brushes aside embarrassing metaphysical problems, and with Shakespeare when he reduces the wonder and agony of Hamlet's "What a piece of work is a man!" to the cool neatness of "This hour a slave, the next a Deity." Variations on the central thesis, "Order is Heaven's first law," maintain the seventeenth-century harmony of authority and science that was breaking down in France. Delight in the beauty of the smooth functioning of the Newtonian

world-machine drew Pope into defending as ultimately for good ends all the dealings of nature with man; an optimism which aroused the confirmed Newtonian Voltaire, on the news of an earthquake that destroyed some sixty thousand Portuguese, to protest in one of his few lyrics throbbing with feeling, "On the Disaster of Lisbon" (1756).

The final stage in Pope's development of the couplet, which he used for all his important work, was away from French syllable-counting and restricted vocabulary toward strong accentual rhythm, colloquialisms, and the setting off of conventionally beautiful diction by the contrast of the expressively ugly. This larger acceptance of pre-Restoration English taste is especially evident in the satires, which exhibit strong feeling paradoxically absent from his lyrical verse. The lyrics are oratorical and self-conscious: the well-known "Eloisa to Abelard" swathes a theme of unusual emotional possibilities in Frenchified diction ("charms," "forbidden fires") and rhetorical externalities like

Speed the soft intercourse from soul to soul
And waft a sigh from Indus to the Pole.

But the satires, unlike Dryden's, involved the poet's hatreds. What jealousy had been for Racine, morbid suspicion and hair-trigger spite were for Pope: a breaking through of conventional manners and diction by elemental passion. Feeling, intellect, and art fuse perfectly in the *Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot* (1735), which develops hints from Boileau into the greatest of poetic apologies for a life devoted to letters. The famous portrait of Atticus refines irony to a Racinian degree. Spirited colloquialism breaks up the couplet with the utmost naturalness into an unsuspected variety of patterns. Malice tempts from the path of decorum to the creation of "beauty that shocks you," as in the castigation of Sporus,

. . . this bug with gilded wings,
This painted child of dirt, that stinks and sings.

The more obvious *Dunciad*, directed against swarms of hack-writers, despite its mock-epic form relates Rabelaisian incidents in Rabelaisian language. But its closing lines, describing with impressive dignity the extinction by Dulness of all human arts and the return of Chaos and Universal Darkness, Pope could not read "without a voice which faltered with emotion." He was evidently aware how recently acquired, how thin, how precarious was the high civilization which was his grand passion.

Pope, as Voltaire perceived early in his career, was the greatest European poet of the first half of the eighteenth century. His finest work, keeping in balance reverence for antiquity, for science and for art, and seasoning them with a naturalness often smelling of the earth, escapes the aridity, artificiality, and cacophony into which the French had fallen.

But after Pope's death in 1744, English poetry likewise rapidly lost its sense of art. His prestige kept the couplet in vogue, but those who, like Samuel Johnson, held most firmly to his critical precepts were blind to the finesse of his practice, so that Cowper could accuse him of having

Made poetry a mere mechanic art:
And ev'ry warbler has his tune by heart.

His successors saw the obvious outlines of his verse, but not the subtle gradation of pauses, the nice discrimination and balance of words. The pungency of his satires was neglected for the conventionalized diction of his widely popular translations of the *Iliad* (1715 ff.) and the *Odyssey*, less extreme examples of the French desire to refine the Greek originals. These translations, Milton, and Dryden's *Aeneid* were the chief sources of what became a standardized poetic vocabulary. Unsustained by the style of Pope or Dryden, satire fell off into the sententiousness of Johnson and the bludgeoning of Churchill, didactic verse into prosaic extremes like Grainger's *Sugar Cane*. Pope's care for polish was best maintained by

Thomas Gray. But Gray did not use the couplet, and the "divine truisms" of his "Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard" (1751) also departed from pattern in a lyricism that is meditative, melancholy, evocative of the moods of nature and compassionate for the humble.

Gray was unaware that the immemorial agricultural economy whose sorrows and joys the "Elegy" records was already in course of a change that would have far-reaching effects upon society and upon poetry. The English nobles, unlike the French, had kept a hand upon the management of their estates. In the second quarter of the eighteenth century, catching the commercial spirit of the middle classes, they sought to increase their incomes through scientific methods of agriculture that broke up the communal system of farming which had produced the English village. The landlord, whose power was no longer as in the Middle Ages relative to the number and strength of his dependents, was indifferent to the consequent unemployment that obliged surplus labor to seek work in cities. This indifference aroused the indignation of a poet aware that the depopulation of the village meant the passing of a way of life around which clustered his happiest memories. Oliver Goldsmith's *Deserted Village* (1770), in denouncing a society in which "wealth accumulates and men decay," repudiated the urban civilization that was the pride and the support of English Augustanism. An end to the harmony of poetry with society was foreshadowed.

Thomas Gray's departure from Augustanism came about through his learning, exceptional even for an age which required that its poets be learned. His curiosity as to the history of poetry led him far afield into Italian, Greek, Hebrew, Old Norse, Icelandic, and Welsh as well as the inevitable Latin. The cloistered, fastidious Cambridge don felt the attraction of his opposite in the rude energy, the metaphorical boldness of the vigorous youth of peoples as far asunder as Greece and Iceland. A Welsh harper, chanting the bardic verse of his

people, impressed him profoundly in 1757. Three years later, he confessed that he had "gone mad" over the "infinite beauty" of what a Scottish schoolmaster, James Macpherson, claimed to be translations from ancient Celtic epic poetry. The undeniable merit of the verse of primitive peoples, the evidence of the major role played by the great Italians—Dante, Petrarch, and Ariosto—in the development of English verse from Chaucer to Milton, made Gray uncertain of the fixed standard of taste assumed by Boileau and Pope. His *Pindaric Odes* (1757), imitative of the impetuosity of the great Greek lyricist, departed from the practice of the British ode by treating themes from Northern Europe. In 1768 he continued in this path by publishing translations from Icelandic, Norse, and Welsh.

None of these later works has the surety and perfection of Gray's more conventional "Elegy," but they are symptomatic of that British restlessness in the confines of French taste which welcomed in the seventeen-sixties a body of Northern poetry. Two examples, Macpherson's "translations" from Ossian (1760, 1762, 1763) and Bishop Percy's *Reliques of Ancient English Poetry* (1765), had international influence. In vain the traditionalism and common sense of the formidable Dr. Johnson denied authenticity and merit to the epic strains ascribed to the bard Ossian. For their vagueness, discontinuity, repetitiousness, and unintellectuality offered relief to many tired of a steady diet of rationalism, their primitive wildness an escape from elaborate social relations, their melancholy a release for indefinable feelings of maladjustment. After the clear and ordered landscape of the Southern convention, the English found the attractiveness of familiarity as well as of exoticism in the genuinely observed Scottish Highlands, close to the sea like the Mediterranean mountains, yet so unlike beneath their chill misty veil, condensing into sounding, unseen cataracts, clothing stones with moss until they look like old graves. The ballads in Bishop Percy's collection, though somewhat regularized and refined to meet the reigning taste

halfway, were indubitably genuine folk poetry. In many readers they awoke a response similar to that of the sophisticated Elizabethan courtier Sir Philip Sidney: "Certainly I must confess my own barbarousness, I never heard the old song of Percy and Douglas, than I found my heart more moved than with a trumpet; yet it is sung . . . with no rougher voice than rude style." The imagination of the "marvelous boy" Thomas Chatterton, dwelling among documents of the English Middle Ages preserved in a Bristol church, produced in archaic language poems of high merit, including the inspired "Songe of Aella" (1768; 1777),* purporting to be the work of a fifteenth-century priest.

In spite of the fulminations of Samuel Johnson, the last of a line of literary dictators begun with Ben Jonson, there were critical support for Northern themes and art, and materials for the manifesto of a new school of poetry. But these were scattered in Richard Hurd's *Letters on Chivalry and Romance* (1762), the comments of Thomas Warton on Spenser and of Joseph Warton on Pope, and such pronouncements as the following from Edward Young's *Conjectures on Original Composition* (1759), written in reply to the Preface to Pope's edition of Shakespeare:

Though Pope's noble Muse may boast her illustrious descent from Homer, Virgil, Horace, yet is an original author more nobly born. . . . A star of the first magnitude among the moderns was Shakespeare; among the ancients, Pindar, who . . . boasted of his no-learning, calling himself the eagle, for his flight above it. . . . Genius is a master-workman, learning is but an instrument. . . . Let us build our compositions with the spirit, and in the taste, of the ancients; but not with their materials. . . . For rules, like crutches, are a needful aid to the lame, tho' an impediment to the strong. . . . There is something in poetry beyond prose-reason; there are mysteries in it not to be explained, but admired.

* Dates given thus indicate the lapse of time between the composition and the publication of a poem. Otherwise, dates are of publication, unless preceded by the abbreviation wr. (written).

Chatterton might have drawn English poetry into new paths. But neglect and want drove him to suicide at seventeen, and no other original personality appeared. Beyond the third quarter of the eighteenth century, while agricultural changes, the rebellion of the American colonists and the less-noticed but even more potent application of the steam engine to industrial machinery sapped its foundations, Augustanism lingered through inertia.



Unlike England, Italy could not temper French influence with a vigorous national life and a vital native literature. Both had been destroyed in the sixteenth century, when Italy had fallen into political subjection to foreign invaders and into spiritual and intellectual subjection to the Inquisition. The bold and fruitful speculation of the Renaissance had been curbed by the imprisonment of Galileo; the great poetic line of Dante, Petrarch, Ariosto, and Tasso came to a close with *Jerusalem Delivered* in 1575. Since 1530 there had, properly speaking, been no Italian history. Parceled among Spain, the Papacy, and Austrian and French princes, Italy had become a mere "geographical expression." Despair as to her literary future was tacitly admitted by the *Dictionary* (1612) of the Della Cruscan Academy, which treated Italian as a dead language, fixing its vocabulary and grammar without regard for current usage, chiefly by reference to the fourteenth-century writers Petrarch and Boccaccio. Verse continued to be written as a pastime of the aristocracy which, without function under foreign rule, lived in enforced idleness, chiefly in cities. The necessity of hiding its thoughts and its morals from the scrutiny of a censorious Church aided by political despotism poisoned its inner life with chronic hypocrisy. Its favorite verse was pastoral, which allowed imaginative escape into the idyllic rusticity of a Golden Age. The seventeenth-century school of Marino sought desperately to vary commonplaces with

stylistic ornament, until "Marinism" became an international term for the extravagant torturing of language. The eighteenth century opened with a reaction toward simplicity and clarity which nevertheless left unapproached the fundamental problem of restoring emotional sincerity and intellectual solidity. The leisure class continued to swarm with versifiers, for the race was temperamental and saturated with literature, the language the most melodious in modern Europe and long schooled to poetic form. But the sense of being inheritors of the greatest of traditions, like a range of mountains with sublime peaks almost continuous from the Greeks and Romans to Dante and his successors, discouraged emulation. All had been said and done. What remained but to enjoy, in *dolce far niente*, the bright skies that had warmed the labors of antiquity and those casual flirtations Metastasio put so gracefully into cynical verse? At the opera one applauded the loftier mood of Metastasio's librettos, grandiloquent gestures toward freedom, justice, nobility; one felt vaguely heroic until the unchangeable actuality of the midnight streets brought back the customary ironic shrug of the shoulders. Two centuries of subjection had left their mark on a people now reconciled to contemplating the gulf between its past and its present.

French literature came to eighteenth-century Italy as an astringent and a stimulant. It discouraged volubility, abbreviated the Ciceronian rotundity of the Italian sentence, and confirmed the example of the Greeks in logical dramatic construction. It supplied subject matter by popularizing Cartesian and Newtonian science, reawakening an interest of which the relaxed vigilance of the Church permitted gratification. The very small upper middle class of professional men and merchants, stirred to hope for social regeneration through science, produced literary criticism attacking imagination in the name of reason and a body of didactic verse proportionately larger than in France or England, but with less artistic quality. More subtle were the *Mattino* (1763) and *Mezzogiorno* (1765) of

Parini, satiric exposures by a plebeian cleric of the degeneration of the aristocracy, which combine Virgilian style with Voltairean conviction. The kinship of the Romance languages made French more current than in England. In that language Goldoni and Casanova wrote their memoirs, Baretta his defense of Shakespeare against Voltaire. When Vittorio Alfieri, having sketched his first tragedies in French prose, turned to versify them in Italian, he found his command of his native tongue so insecure that he must study its grammar and literature and acquire spoken idiom by quitting his native Piedmont for a sojourn in Tuscany.

Alfieri was the first conspicuous example of the invigoration of the aristocracy Parini preached. Bored by the amusements and dissipations rank and fortune put at his disposal, he traveled restlessly and adventurously over Europe, continually chafing at the conventions of society and the despotism of rulers. By accident he found in writing both a vent for his independent spirit and a means of self-discipline. Remembering with disgust the sight of Metastasio, for all his heroic sentiments in opera, genuflecting to the Austrian empress, Alfieri praised tyrannicide in earnest and dedicated his last tragedy, *Bruto secondo* (1789), "to the Italian people of the future." In his detestation of mellifluousness as an outward sign of the pusillanimity of his countrymen, he outdid his model Corneille in austerity. His dramas and sonnets suffer from harshness, bareness and abruptness, but their violent sincerity was a necessary bridge to the sincere action in which a significant Italian poetry must be rooted.

That action and that poetry had to await the passage of the Alps in 1796 by the army of Napoleon, aflame with a new French gospel of liberty.



Like Italy, dismembered, but, unlike Italy, without the sustaining memory of a great civilization and a great litera-

ture, Germany lay at the feet of the superior French culture. The Renaissance had scarcely arrived from Italy when the Reformation turned minds into religious channels and into strife. For sophisticated court poetry, the German must look backward to the brief Hohenstaufen era at the turn of the twelfth into the thirteenth century. The close of the wars of religion left Germany, their chief battleground, depopulated, economically exhausted, without political cohesion, without culture. The once proud Holy Roman Empire, parceled into some 350 states over which it had scarcely the shadow of authority, under Leopold I (1658-1705) yielded to Louis XIV's aggressions, which pushed the French border to the Rhine.

The Germans felt in every way inferior to their French neighbors. No matter how small his territory, each prince built his little Versailles and aped French manners, dress and taste. Even Frederick the Great of Prussia, who humbled the armies of Louis XV, spoke and wrote French to the neglect of his native tongue. German literature, disdained almost universally by princes and aristocrats, was left to the patronage and cultivation of the middle class, which could hardly hold up its head financially until after the close of Frederick's wars in 1763. The language, long in literary disuse, had to go to school to the French for the purification of its vocabulary and the regularizing of its syntax. Small wonder that dogmatic critics often taught wrong lessons to the proverbially docile Germans. On the recommendation of Opitz in the seventeenth century, the Alexandrine, contrary to the genius of the language, had been adopted as the standard verse of the German dramatists, who in the second quarter of the eighteenth century as unhesitatingly obeyed a literal-minded interpretation of French critical rules by the pedant Gottsched, Professor of Poetry in the University of Leipzig. Poets cultivated the types in vogue at Paris—plays, pastorals, Anacreontic amatory verse, didactic verse—without thought of the interests and the needs

of German readers. At length in Wieland's rococo narrative *Musarion* (1768), German was admitted even by aristocrats to have attained the clarity and grace of French style.

A secondary foreign influence was the English, beginning much later, and important only after the accession of a German prince in 1714 to the British throne had brought the peoples politically and economically closer. The German middle class found English, a half-Germanic tongue, easier to acquire than French, and its literature, with its middle-class admixture, more congenial. The current school of Pope had its way prepared by the French; the *Essay on Man* and *The Rape of the Lock* (translated by Gottsched's wife in 1744) were readily assimilable. But the older English poetry, as it slowly became known, confused German opinion. Shakespeare broke dramatic rules; Milton, regular enough in form, displeased by his strong religious feeling the disciples of the *philosophes*, zealous for the Enlightenment. Milton's themes attracted, however, an influential minority, the Pietists, who in reaction against rationalism were reviving emotional religion. They were quick to greet as a great German epic Klopstock's *Messias* (1748), though in its diffuseness and vague emotionalism it falls far short of its model, *Paradise Regained*. Klopstock's real importance lay rather in his having broken away from French leading strings. He was genuinely Teutonic in feeling, and had discovered in the German language, which is both quantitative and accentual, a surprising adaptability to the Homeric hexameter, which the English and the French had failed to domesticate. The employment in his subsequent *Odes* of Greek lyric meters led to the further discovery of the possibilities of unrhymed accentual free rhythms, which, along with the successful imitation of English blank verse by dramatists, completed the liberation of German from French syllable-counting and bondage to rhyme.

Shakespeare, appealing to no special group and only to scattered readers while the German playhouses were monopo-

lized by traveling French companies and native plays after the French model, had to meet the organized hostility of the literary dictator Gottsched and his disciples. For his dramas transgressed authority and social refinement by disregarding the unities, verisimilitude and noble tragic diction; yet they fascinated writers and critics who ought to have known better. Even the master of the French style, Wieland, succumbed to the extent of publishing between 1762 and 1766 twenty-two Shakespearean plays in whole or in part, with notes censuring, it is true, numerous defects of form and taste, but not concealing admiration for the lively fancy and broad humanity of the comedies. The aging Gottsched, alarmed at the growing apostasy from correctness, pursued Shakespeare with bitter denigration. His attacks provoked a crushing retort from one of the greatest critical minds of all time, Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. Lessing met Gottsched on his own traditional and rationalistic ground in *Letters on Current Literature* (No. 17, 1759) and more fully in the *Hamburg Dramaturgy* (1767 ff.) by appeal to the authority of Aristotle. Aristotle's *Poetics* said that tragedy "through pity and fear" produces the "proper purgation of the emotions." This, Lessing insisted, was precisely the effect of the tragedies of Shakespeare. Yet how justify their divergence from the rules? The rules, Lessing pointed out, those really to be found in Aristotle and not accretions of his commentators, were generalizations concerning the plays most successful in the Greek theatre: they did not pretend to be ends in themselves, valid for all time and all places. Shakespeare, faced with different theatrical conditions, had been obliged to adapt or invent other means to the same ends. Genius in every era could devise its own rules. From study of the working of Aristotle's mind in his *Ethics* and *Rhetoric*, Lessing thus revolutionized the attitude toward his *Poetics*, which could no longer be regarded as a storehouse of universally valid maxims. But Aristotle retained his authority as a master of method; by his light the tragedies of Shakespeare could be

seen, not as formless, but as in one of many possible forms. Lessing urged that this form was more congenial to the German mind and theatre than the French. The heavy hand of Gottsched was lifted from the drama by this enlightened rationalism, supported by a sense of history which was the special contribution of Lessing's generation of Germans.

How this historical sense, far-reaching in its consequences, arose, no one has explained. Nor how it should have come simultaneously and independently to Johann Winckelmann in the course of his rediscovery of Greek art, which involved another great contribution to critical method. The way to this rediscovery was by miracles of divination. The son of a Prussian cobbler, Winckelmann had an instinct for things Greek which he managed to satisfy in a land almost wholly ignorant of the language. From the writers he most admired, those of the age of Socrates, he formed a conception of what the corresponding Greek art must have been. Dresden, the most art-loving of German cities, disgusted him by its taste for the rococo, with its restlessness and its concealment of structural lines by elegant detail, and for the heavier baroque out of which the rococo had developed. In 1755, when he had not been outside of Germany and while his knowledge of Hellenic art was confined to coins, copies of engraved gems, and plaster casts of statues, he launched a pamphlet, *Thoughts on the Imitation of the Greeks in Painting and Sculpture*, challenging the current "gim-cracks and . . . beloved mussel-shell work" with a celebrated definition of the distinguishing characteristics of the best Greek art as "a noble simplicity and a quiet greatness, in attitude as well as in expression." This was a marvelous intuition of the style of the fifth century B.C. Of this style there were as yet almost no examples to be seen even in Rome, which Winckelmann reached by means of almost incredible sacrifices a few months later, or in Naples, where he stole glimpses of the jealously guarded treasures recently excavated from Hercu-

laneum and Pompeii. He never saw Greece. But his epoch-making *History of Art among the Ancients* (1764) ventured a brilliant guess at the reasons for her preëminence: the advantages of a temperate climate, clear skies, free political institutions, and a race delighting in the contemplation of physical beauty. Among the Greeks, Winckelmann observed with a didactic side glance at his contemporaries, works of art were judged, not by rich patrons, but by the most competent among the whole body of citizens; there was no snobbish attitude toward the handicrafts, the names of the makers of beautiful articles of every sort, even of saddles, being handed down to posterity. This assertion by Winckelmann of an organic relation of the arts to the society in which they are produced (a complex variable of geography, institutions, and race) broadened the historical approach to aesthetic questions implied in Lessing's vindication of Shakespeare. Lessing and Winckelmann, from the study of different arts and periods, converged in a denial of the French claim to a fixed standard of taste. Democratic Athens, Renaissance London mingling in the theatre diverse ranks of a feudal society becoming fluid, and the court of Louis XIV could each produce masterpieces after its kind, incommensurate with one another. Winckelmann's pamphlet of 1755 had thrown out still another pregnant suggestion: "The fine arts have their youth, as well as men"; their history might be cyclic.

These critical insights, concurrent with German acquaintance with the Icelandic Eddas, Ossian and Percy's ballads, and with Klopstock's demonstration of the special qualities of the German language as a poetic instrument, pointed in a single direction. More thoroughly grounded, more systematic than similar tendencies in England of the same decade (the seven-teen-sixties), they also awaited synthesis and transference into practice. Through historical accident, poetry first achieved independence of French taste in the then culturally poorer Germany.

Chapter Two

THE VOICE OF THE NORTH

LEIPZIG LIKED to be called "Little Paris." Not an old German city, it had been the freer to adopt French architecture and had constructed a promenade lined with pollarded trees for the afternoon stroll of its burghers. French stock companies played in its theatre. Gottsched had laid down literary law from a chair in its University since 1730, and the faculty boasted another man of letters in Gellert, who aspired to be the German La Fontaine. The students had the reputation of being more concerned with French gallantry than with books. They laughed at the arrival in 1765 from old-fashioned Frankfurt-am-Main of the sixteen-year-old Johann Wolfgang Goethe with his provincial tailoring and accent. But with the adaptability that was always to be his, in a few days the newcomer was appearing on the promenade with powdered hair and in knee breeches, hat correctly under arm and rapier at side.

Young Goethe had come prepared to accept the superiority of Latin culture. His father, a well-to-do citizen of the free Imperial city of Frankfurt, never tired of relating the wonders of his visit to Italy, which he declared indispensable to the rounding off of an education. In the solid instruction he had taken pains to give his only son at home, Latin, French, and Italian had preceded a smattering of Greek and English, and drawing lessons were after Italian and French models. Although patriotically resenting the occupation of Frankfurt by

French troops (1759-1762), he had permitted the boy to attend theatrical performances given in French for the invaders; he tried to prevent his reading Klopstock, who sinned against orthodox versification. Amid the gallantries and dissipations of his university years, young Goethe continued the cultural program prescribed from his home. Oeser, a friend of Winckelmann, gave instruction in drawing; Gellert taught him pure High German and disciplined his writing to Gallic clarity and ease. Goethe composed a pastoral play in Alexandrines and a comedy of manners after the style of Molière. In this imitative stage he fell under the influence of the German writers most popular at Leipzig, the Anacreontic school headed by Wieland. Unaware that these imitators of Gallic amorous verse mirroring the graceful frivolity of a bored and reckless aristocracy were respectable middle-class fathers of families, he mistook literary convention for realism. In their manner he wrote lyrics and apologues reflecting his own experience with the technique of seduction, and further departed from convention by feeling responsible for the young woman pursued. He wished to marry the "Annette" of his lyrics, although she was the daughter of the keeper of a student boarding house. In his third university year the pleasures of "Little Paris," pursued with German intensity complicated by German seriousness, caused a hemorrhage of the lungs that obliged his return to Frankfurt in a dangerous condition.

When Goethe was strong enough to resume his studies eighteen months later, he sought French culture in France itself, at the University of Strassburg. Like Frankfurt an ancient free city of the Holy Roman Empire, Strassburg had been French for less than a century, since its seizure by Louis XIV in 1681. In the spring of 1770, Goethe found himself one of many German students facing the discouraging task of acquiring idiomatic French preliminary to absorbing the dominant culture. They nicknamed him "the blue bird" from his gay Leipzig manner, but within him was the gravity come

of narrow escape from death. In slow convalescence under the parental roof, he had wondered at his enjoyment of solitude and his respect for the Pietism of his mother's friend, Frau von Klettenberg, which had once seemed unworthy of the enlightened age. In a mood of thankfulness for returning health he read Luther's Bible and Klopstock. While brooding upon the mystery of the world, for which the matter and motion of the *philosophes* seemed too simple an explanation, he had dabbled in alchemy in search of some wonderful unifying principle. In the comedy he had begun at Leipzig, *Die Mitschuldigen*, he now made an implied criticism of rococo morals by putting the aristocratic pastime of stealing a wife's affections on a par with the plebeian stealing of a purse.

Immediately upon his arrival at Strassburg, curiosity had driven him to visit the Cathedral, which teachers confident that the Greco-Roman was the only respectable architectural tradition had prepared him to find hideous and badly proportioned, a rude product of the barbarous Middle Ages. From a cramped square of old gabled houses with curiously carved wooden beams he had looked up at the enormous façade flanked by great towers, and found it disconcertingly beautiful. Dynamic, richly and even grotesquely ornamented, endlessly proliferous, it nevertheless defied Winckelmann's inspiring canon of "noble simplicity and quiet greatness." Searching the archives for the names of the builders of this monstrous miracle, Goethe found them all German, from the original thirteenth-century Erwin von Steinach onward to its completion. The untraveled youth leaped to the conclusion that the international style now called Gothic was a German invention. In one art at least, his countrymen had not been imitative.

One autumn day, Goethe encountered on the stairway of a Strassburg inn a clerical-looking stranger in a black silk mantle, whom he guessed to be Johann Gottfried Herder, a young literary critic with a reputation second only to Les-

sing's. His self-introduction was received affably. Herder was in a mood to welcome company, for he was to undergo an eye operation that would confine him in a darkened room. Repeated surgical failures kept him in the city until spring; and Goethe became his almost daily visitor. Herder had the wider experience and travel of his twenty-six years to Goethe's twenty-one. With ready sarcasm he demolished his junior's flattering estimate of contemporary German authors. But his tone changed when he spoke of what German literature might become. With the swift comprehension of developing genius, Goethe drank in the picturesque outpouring of a new poetic creed.

Herder was a native of the German region most remote from France, East Prussia on the Baltic Sea. The son of a village schoolmaster, he had been obliged to earn his way at the local University of Königsberg. He had the luck to study under Immanuel Kant, then unknown to fame, and caught his desire for universal knowledge. Through Kant, he became acquainted with Rousseau's newly published *Émile* (1762), which attacked the forcing system of education that sacrificed childhood, and *Discourse on the Sciences and the Arts* (1750), with its thesis that the high civilization of which France boasted was an impoverishment and perversion of human nature. Herder learned English from the Königsberger Hamann, a Pietistic mystic who in revolt against what he considered the one-sidedness of rationalism protested that "passion alone gives to abstraction hands, feet, wings; passion alone gives to images and symbols spirit, life, language. A heart without passions is a head without ideas." English was the key to Young on *Original Composition*, Ossian, and Percy's ballad collection, which reinforced the interest in primitive peoples awakened by his reading of Rousseau; an interest further gratified during Herder's first pastorate in the Russian city of Riga, where he observed Slavic festivals with their wild energy and artistic spontaneity, so foreign to disciplined, plodding Prussia. He

began to collect Lithuanian folk songs, after the example of Bishop Percy.

In 1769 he had decided to widen his experience in quite the opposite fashion by visiting the centers of civilization, beginning with France. The six weeks' voyage to Nantes in a small sailing vessel at the mercy of wind and wave awoke Herder to the extent of man's dependence on nature; not book learning and theorizing but instinctive reading of her moods could ward off danger and enlist her powers to speed the ship. He felt that by wasting years in abstract study, he had lost contact with reality. Now he understood the *Odyssey*; Greek literature took on new significance as the production of a sea-faring people. Passing through the narrow Kattegat and Skagerrak, he caught glimpses of the dim Scandinavian shores that gave a setting for Norse myth and saga and helped him to imagine across the North Sea to the southwest the wild Scottish coastal mountains of Morven, the background of the shadowy figures of Ossian. He understood more fully Hamann's assertion that poetry was "the mother-tongue of the human race," the instinctive utterance of primitive man, rather than a product of learning and refinement. The sunny Mediterranean with its sharply outlined coasts must have given birth to quite a different poetry from these mysterious northern seas. He leaped to the conclusion that there had not been one main stream of European civilization, but two: a Northern as well as a Southern. To the Northern, Germans belonged. But the more rapid development of the Southern culture had attracted Germany into imitation; mistaken imitation, for societies, languages, and literatures have inescapable stages of childhood, youth, maturity, and age. The Southern culture represented by France, already past maturity, was producing abstract thought rather than poetry. Germans should not be apologetic that what literature they produced independently was comparatively unformed and therefore close to the beginning of a cultural cycle; for theirs was the future. The

youth of a language, instinctive song and metaphor, was alone poetic, unspoiled by the abstractions of maturity and the rigid conventions of age. German poetry could spring to life by ceasing to model itself after the South, by resuming contact with the spoken language and the Teutonic tradition of folk songs and Luther's Bible. Shakespeare, authentically Northern and popular, showed what could lie ahead.

After so fruitful a voyage, France was an anticlimax for Herder. Paris, where he met Diderot, who shared his interest in the primitive, confirmed his preconception of a fatigued, effete civilization. Wrecked on the homeward voyage upon a sand bar off the Dutch coast, while waiting for rescue he read Ossian in a perfect setting of flung spray and menacing night wind.

Memory of these momentous voyages was fresh when he discoursed in the darkened room at Strassburg. To show Goethe the true poetic vein, he recited the verse of many lands: English, Scottish, Finnish, Lithuanian, and German popular ballads, bits of the Icelandic Eddas, and, on a higher stage of culture, songs from Shakespeare's plays. The Old Testament, he declared, was largely of the same stuff; *Genesis* and the Homeric poems were alike "national legends," the expression of the religion and patriotism of the Hebrews and the Greeks. Such poetry was the common property of a people, the outgrowth of a race and its institutions. The poetry of every people was to a large degree inimitable. Still, it was possible to learn from foreign works "the art of discovering, creating, clothing." But first the lost art of reading poetry must be regained. Poetry must be read aloud in the original, Homer and Pindar in Greek, Shakespeare not in Wieland's prose that Goethe knew but in English. German also had its peculiar merits. It combined, Herder maintained, most of the advantages for poetry of Greek and English, being both quantitative and accentual, rich and unpruned in vocabulary and inflections, free to invert and to form compounds. It was clearly superior

to the "watery, nerveless, inharmonious" French, whose sparse vocabulary was "perfect for the philosopher, but bad for the poet, who . . . must live from superfluity, who does not define conceptions clearly, but seeks to express conceptions and inventions movingly and richly." The German poet should lend an experimental ear to the impassioned speech of daily life, and see what rhythms it had to offer verse. The life and language had untapped riches that might equal its elder brother, English.

Seeing Shakespeare the poet where Lessing had seen the playwright, Herder marveled at the phenomenon of genius which had created the colossal figures of the tragedies, explaining it, like Hamann, as an extraordinary influx of the spiritual energy pervading the universe and uniting man with God and with nature. Return to the refreshing sources of Northern culture and living speech could not of itself raise German verse to such a height. Genius must descend by accident of birth to restore the original unity of human powers broken by rationalism, which had divorced the intellect from the instincts, and by rococo materialism, which had divorced the senses from the spirit. A genius would not write to please an audience, to meet the demands of refinement, learning and traditional taste; he would create poetry only to release pent-up emotion, to satisfy his individual sense of reality.

Herder's wide-ranging curiosity, quick susceptibility to every variety of taste, and prodigious memory had added to his original insight borrowings from Rousseau, Kant, Hamann, Young, Lessing, and Winckelmann to assemble the most fertile critical ideas of his time. He was conceiving the universe, not as dead matter obeying mechanically fixed laws, but as alive and developing like an organism. He was thinking in terms of time as well as of space. He was interpreting cultural history by the analogy of the individual man as a cyclic process of birth, growth, maturity, decay and death, of which only recently Spengler deduced the fullest consequences. He was

judging civilizations by no absolute standards but relatively to race, climate and stages of development. Comparative literature was discovered. Herder's theory of poetry as the self-expression of an artist and not solely response to an audience had likewise extraordinary possibilities. Deriving from the immanent spirit of the universe the genius who was law unto himself, Herder, strangely enough for a Prussian, was an individualist.

In typical Teutonic fashion, here was a systematic, far-reaching philosophy of literature antecedent to creation. Who was the genius who would test it in practice? Not Herder, in spite of his efforts. But by chance almost as inexplicable as genius itself, Herder's eloquence was the final impulse needed to break the young Goethe away from literary convention and release the mighty powers half-slumbering within him.



Goethe scoured the Alsatian plain the more eagerly for folk songs at Herder's bidding, because he had already found there another attraction in the daughter of the pastor of Sesenheim, a village eighteen miles from Strassburg. Friederike Brion, with her yellow braids and local costume of short skirt, laced bodice and cap, was symbolic of his turning away from the international aristocratic taste. Herder's insistence that emotion could pour forth in poetry without reflection or sophistication, simply from the joy or the relief of singing, loosed from Goethe something long unheard, the authentic voice of youth without aping of maturity. The short lyric, "Erwache Friederike" (Awake! Friederike) has the spontaneity of "Hark, Hark, the Lark," with an additional touch of light-hearted humor. The freely flowing "Mailed" (May Song) celebrates the identity of instinctive mating with the germinating forces of nature, the riotous joy of wild creatures and the spirit of poetry. Goethe acknowledged kinship with earth, which the intellectual classes of Europe had long re-

pudiated. He abandoned the rococo conception of love as mere gratification of sensual pleasure. In "Willkommen und Abschied" (Welcome and Farewell), commemorating a parting of the student from the village maiden, he accepted the pains of love also, the contraction of his heart and the tears in Friederike's eyes. His style had not lost the finish of his Leipzig apprenticeship, but the emotion seemed scarcely his own, rather a force of nature.

Shakespeare, too, pushed him out of emotional shallows: "The first page of him I read made me his for life, and when I was done with the first work, I stood like one born blind to whom a magic hand gives sight instantaneously. I knew, I felt most vividly my existence broadened endlessly; all was new, unknown, and the unwonted light pained my eyes." Here was poetry of amazing scope, including the aristocratic subtlety of Racine within the portrayal of all sorts and conditions of men, poetry that could pass from earthy speech to a metaphorical splendor which set the imagination in a fever. Overpowering as Shakespeare was, Goethe felt within himself the response of kindred genius. Yet to follow into the new realms of creation meant the sacrifice of much that he had painfully learned, a reversal of his habits of composition. Shakespeare's instinctive holding up the mirror to nature was no longer possible after a training which rationally adjusted means to ends. Could he be imitated consciously? That demanded sloughing off prejudices of education and social environment in order to look upon the world freshly, to feel spontaneously, even naïvely.

Inner adjustment involved outward changes. Goethe's Strassburg friends observed that he ceased to powder and curl his hair, wore clothing which defied fashion, turned down the brim of his hat, assumed free and easy manners, moved about unceremoniously as the mood prompted. He identified himself so completely with Homeric heroes in reading aloud that even the enthusiast Herder could scarcely stifle laughter.

But beside the "colossal greatness" of Shakespeare's creations Goethe, for all his youthful self-confidence, felt himself a little man. That he still had much to learn from Herder, he confessed in writing him six months after their separation: "If I am fated to be your planet, then I will be it gladly, faithfully. . . . I won't release you. I won't release you—Jacob wrestled with the Angel of the Lord."

Two forces of nature, sex and the urge to poetic creation, whose harmony had produced his best lyrics, came into collision when he was obliged to leave Strassburg after winning his degree in August, 1771, to begin the legal practice his father had prepared for him in Frankfurt. He had yielded to his passion for Friederike with the spontaneity of his new cult, but now he was forced to ask himself if he intended a marriage which would involve financial and social responsibility, curtailing the independence, leisure and solitude vital for poetry. His reluctant decision to renounce Friederike left behind it an ineradicable sense of guilt and pity for his victim that were to bring the first tragic notes into his verse.

Soon after settling again in Frankfurt, Goethe sent Herder twelve ballads with their old music taken from the lips of Alsatian peasant women, and translations from Ossian. The minor legal business his father secured for him permitted the leisure for which he had sacrificed love; but the sacrifice left his verse for some months without other content than a sense of inner power. "Wandrer's Sturmlied" (1771; 1775), composed in the exhilaration of a gallop in the rain, exploits German rhythms in unrhymed free verse and revels in the license to form new compounds while praising the untrammelled energy of Pindar and pouring scorn on tame pastorals and Anacreontics. "Adler und Taube" (Eagle and Dove, 1771; 1773) is an allegory of the irrelevance of Horace's gospel of the golden mean to fierce and lofty natures. After restless travel about the Rhine valley, depressed that his verse had nothing to say, he composed the slow-paced meditative "Ein

zärtlich jugendlicher Kummer," recommending to himself the patience of a gardener waiting for the sprouting of his seeds.

The best portrait of Goethe in this agitated period is by J. C. Kestner, who met him the summer of 1772 in the sleepy cathedral town of Wetzlar, where both were observing the attempt of the Supreme Court to clarify the confused laws of the Holy Roman Empire:

A true genius and a man of character, he has an extraordinarily lively imagination, so that he expresses himself for the most part in pictures and metaphors. He frequently says that he always expresses himself figuratively and can never do so literally. . . . He is violent in all his feelings, yet has often much self-control. He has a noble way of thinking, as free as possible from prejudices, acts as he likes without caring whether it pleases others, whether "it is done," whether convention allows it. All compulsion is hateful to him. He is *bizarre*, and has several things in his behavior and outward appearance that could make him offensive. But he is a favorite with children, ladies and many others. He thinks highly of Rousseau without being his blind admirer.

Kestner was busy as secretary of the Hanoverian mission to the Court. Goethe, seeing quickly that the Court, like everything else in that ghost of an Empire, was losing itself in formalities, preferred the company of Kestner's fiancée, Lotte Buff. What began in the untroubled joy of youthful comradeship became in a few weeks for the susceptible poet a passion that did not escape Kestner's observation. There was no rupture of friendship. Kestner gave kindly but firm warning, and Lotte was faithful to her pledged word. Goethe knew that he should not continue to see her, but for days his will was paralyzed. Their conversation on topics fascinating to sentimental youth, death and immortality, drew the confession that he was tempted to suicide. He scarcely knew how after this agonized avowal he summoned strength to write a letter of farewell and leave Wetzlar.

From this ordeal, Goethe emerged with a thankful con-

viction of being under the protection of that guardian spirit which Herder likened to Socrates's *daimon*. In spite of his conscious will it had saved him from shipwreck on the rocks of sex. He was its chosen vessel for pain as well as for joy; but never would the widening of his experience involve his annihilation. This assurance made the three following years, 1772 to 1775, passed chiefly in the family house in Frankfurt, the most creative of his poetic life. *Macbeth*, *Lear*, and *Hamlet* seemed closer to his grasp, and after their kind he began dramas, *Mohamet*, *Caesar*, *Prometheus*. But his conception of these great central figures proved insufficient. What was saved for publication was chiefly lyrical. "Mohamet's Song" (1772; 1773) compares the growth of spiritual power to the swelling of a mountain stream that draws tributaries to the sea; the irregular verses respond perfectly to the moods of the joyful sea-ward course. A companion piece is the ever-quickenning song of "Ganymede" (1774; 1789) as he is rapt upward to the bosom of all-loving, eternal Zeus. There are no more satisfying and beautiful allegories of the influx of creative force.

The way to more objective writing Goethe found through folk songs. The familiar "Heidenröslein" (1771; 1773) is a free adaptation of an Alsatian original. "Es war ein König im Thule" (1774; 1782), later incorporated in *Faust*, is far more: an independent creation for the German imagination in the finest Scottish ballad manner. Elemental tragedy is conveyed by reticence, vowel overtones, and the inevitable word; skillful archaism completes the illusion of remoteness. The sight of a ruined castle high above the Rhine stirred Goethe to the impromptu "Geistes Gruss" (1774; 1789) dictated to a boating companion, an interpretation of the dauntless spirit of a mediaeval baron.

The Middle Ages were far closer in old-fashioned Frankfurt than in Leipzig. Still girdled by walls and moat, the city centered in the Römerplatz, so called because Holy Roman emperors had been elected there since 1562. Between this

square and the church where they were crowned lay a labyrinth of houses whose elaborately carved wooden fronts and projecting upper storeys almost met across narrow streets. In 1765 Goethe had watched with the excited curiosity of his sixteen years the elaborate ceremonial of a coronation procession. The Empire was a tangible link with a remote glorious German past, the era of the Hohenstaufens. The intervening feudal anarchy loosed by the decay of Imperial authority gave Goethe the theme of a prose drama, *Götz von Berlichingen* (1773), which won him acclaim as the founder of a national school of literature. A poetic drama, also Shakespearean in form, on the mediaeval German popular legend of Doctor Faust was already well begun when a prose narrative of modern life, *Die Leiden des jungen Werthers* (The Sufferings of the Young Werther), made him at twenty-five internationally famous.

Into *Werther* (1774), drawing on his Wetzlar experience, went much of the best of the young Goethe: his Hamlet-like brooding on human destiny, his feeling for nature, his enthusiasm for Homer and Ossian. The frustrations of his generation of middle-class Germans: their lack of political rights, subjection to aristocratic privilege, social formality and arranged marriages, their resentment against the dry intellectualism and complacent traditionalism which cramped action and stifled emotion, found a voice. The plaint echoed throughout Europe. Goethe's desk was piled with letters of compliment and inquiry; pilgrims came to Frankfurt for advice on personal problems. Stronger with the knowledge that he was not alone, Goethe changed the unrest of *Werther* into a major key in a monologue assembled from bits of his abandoned *Prometheus* (1774; 1785). In unrhymed free rhythms that ring as on an anvil, the Titan utters his defiance of Zeus, who is indifferent to the lot of mankind. With transparent symbolism, it is a challenge to authoritarian religion and political absolutism:

Bedecke deinen Himmel, Zeus,
Mit Wolkendunst
Und übe, dem Knaben gleich,
Der Disteln köpft,
An Eichen dich und Bergeshöhn;
Musst mir meine Erde
Doch lassen stehn
Und meine Hütte, die du nicht gebaut,
Und meinen Herd,
Um dessen Glut
Du mich beneidest.

Ich kenne nichts Ärmeres
Unter der Sonn' als euch, Götter!
Ihr nähret kümmerlich
Von Opfersteuern
Und Gebetshauch
Eure Majestät,
Und darbet, wären
Nicht Kinder und Bettler
Hoffnungsvolle Toren.

Da ich ein Kind war,
Nicht wusste wo aus noch ein,
Kehrt' ich mein verirrtes Auge
Zur Sonne, als wenn drüber wär'
Ein Ohr, zu hören meine Klage,
Ein Herz, wie meins,
Sich des Bedrängten zu erbarmen.

Wer half mir
Wider der Titanen Übermut?
Wer rettete vom Tode mich,
Von Sklaverei?
Hast du nicht alles selbst vollendet,
Heilig glühend Herz?
Und glühtest jung und gut,
Betrogen, Rettungsdank
Dem Schlafenden da droben?

Ich dich ehren? Wofür?
Hast du die Schmerzen gelindert

Je des beladenen?
Hast du die Tränen gestillet
Je des Geängsterten?
Hat nicht mich zum Manne geschmeidet
Die allmächtige Zeit
Und das ewige Schicksal,
Meine Herren und deine?

Wähntest du etwa
Ich sollte das Leben hassen,
In Wüsten fliehen,
Weil nicht alle
Blüenträume reiften?

Hier sitz' ich, forme Menschen
Nach meinem Bilde,
Ein Geschlecht, das mir gleich sei,
Zu leiden, zu weinen,
Zu geniessen und zu freuen sich,
Und dein nicht zu achten,
Wie ich!

Cover thine Heaven, Zeus,
With mist and cloud
And like a boy
Beheading thistles
Try thy bolts
On oaks and mountain heights;
For thou must let my Earth
Still stand, my huts
That thou didst not build,
And my hearth whose heat
Thou enviest me.

I know nothing under the sun
Poorer than you, ye gods!
You nourish scantily
From offerings
And breath of prayers
Your majesty,
And would starve
Were not children and beggars
Hopeful fools.

When I was a child, and knew not
My way about,
I turned my erring eye
To the sun,
As if up there were an ear
To hear my complaints,
A heart like mine
To pity the oppressed.

Who helped me
Against the Titans' arrogance?
Who rescued me from death,
From slavery?
Hast thou not accomplished all thyself,
Holy glowing heart?
And didst thou, young and strong,
Deluded, send warm thanks for rescue
To Him sleeping up there?

I honor thee? Why?
Hast thou ever lightened the pains
Of the heavy laden?
Ever quenched the tears
Of the fearful?
Have not they wrought me to manhood,
Almighty Time
And everlasting Fate,
My masters and thine?

Dost thou somehow think
I should hate life,
Flee to the wastes,
Because not all my blossoming dreams
Have ripened?

Here I sit, form men
After my image,
A race to be like me,
To bear, to weep,
Enjoy, rejoice,
Without regard for thee,
Like me!

Goethe, as all who met him observed, had the force and naturalness of the Titanic figures he was creating. In the year of "Prometheus," the young poet Heinse wrote: "Goethe called, a handsome young man of twenty-five; from head to foot genius, strength and force." A few days earlier another acquaintance had described him to Wieland: "Goethe is . . . a demonic personality. . . . One needs be with him only an hour to find it in the highest degree absurd to require him to think or to act otherwise than he thinks and acts. . . . He must behave like the opening bud, the germinating seed, the tree growing upward." The rapid shifting of his feelings from joy to sorrow, his volubility and vivid imagery were a source of anxiety to friends: "There is danger that his fire will consume him."

Scarcely had another year begun, when the rebel genius was writing thus to the mother of a friend:

If you, my dear, can imagine a Goethe clad in a braided coat and with tolerably consistent fashionableness from head to foot, illuminated by the insignificant splendor of wall lights and candelabra, held at the gaming table in the midst of all sorts of people by a pair of beautiful eyes, driven alternately for diversion from the salon into the concert room and thence to the ballroom, who with all the interest of frivolity pays court to a pretty blonde, you have the portrait of the present festive Goethe.

The author of *Werther* had not escaped being lionized by the Frankfurt social set, which included the attractive daughter of a wealthy banker. Anna Schöнемann, or Lili as Goethe called her, was genuine for all her schooling in Gallic etiquette. When they were alone, he found her irresistible; but when were they left alone? Her acquaintances dropped in continually to interrupt *tête-à-têtes*. Elderly men took advantage of a quasi-paternal role toward the seventeen-year-old girl for familiarities that stirred the poet's jealous blood. Addressing her as Belinde, a name chosen with significance from the rococo pastoral, he described in a charming lyric the delight—that he was sur-

rendering for her—of solitary musing in his moonlit attic room. Against the opposition of both families, who thought their tastes incompatible, they became formally engaged. Still, Goethe could not rid himself of misgivings that drew a long sigh at the seemingly inevitable pains of love. On a wild tramp through Switzerland with two enthusiasts for his cult of nature, he tried the effect of absence. At the grave of Erwin von Steinach, the architect of Strassburg Cathedral, he renewed his pledge of devotion to genius that defied opinion. Returning to Lili surrounded by admirers, he felt the tug at his heart intensified. Grapes ripening in that autumn of 1775 brought tears because nature refused a similar maturing of his love for this intriguing creature of society. The resulting lyric, "Herbstgefühl" (Autumn Feeling), unmindful of an audience and only hinting at a meaning by emotional and atmospheric contrast, is a perfect instance of the emancipation of his verse from the abstract explicitness of rationalism:

Fetter grüne, du Laub,
Am Rebengeländer
Hier mein Fenster herauf!
Gedrängter quellet,
Zwillingsbeeren, und reifet
Schneller und glänzend voller!
Euch brütet der Mutter Sonne
Scheideblick; euch umsäuselt
Des holden Himmels
Fruchtende Fülle;
Euch kühlet des Mondes
Freundlicher Zauberhauch,
Und euch betauen, ach!
Aus diesen Augen
Der ewig belebenden Liebe
Vollschwellende Tränen.

Flourish richer, O leaf,
On the grape-lattice here
By my window!
Swell closer together,

Clustered grapes, and ripen
 Quicker and glisten more fully!
 On you broods the parting look
 Of mother sun; about you
 Whispers the maturing fullness
 Of the benignant sky.
 The magic breath of the kindly moon
 Cools you, and alas!
 From these eyes welling tears
 Of ever-quickenning love
 Bedew you.

Escape from irresolution as painful as that at Wetzlar came with an invitation for a long stay at Weimar, in central Germany, as guest of the young Duke. The invitation was the more attractive because it also meant temporary financial independence from his father, which authorship, in those days before copyright, could not give. The twenty-two-year-old Duke's admiration of *Werther* offered apparent security from entangling court etiquette. Goethe's father interposed his burgher's suspicion of aristocratic fickleness, and a wise friend pointed out that Frankfurt, a commercial and somewhat cosmopolitan city on a navigable river, offered more varied experience to a writer than an inland town. After much agitation, Goethe decided that the *daimon* presiding over his destinies pointed to Weimar. He tore himself from Lili to accompany the Duke's messengers. On arrival at Weimar, he sent her in atonement one of the most graceful of compliments:

Flieh' ich, Lili, von dir! . . .

Wie ein Vogel, der den Faden bricht
 Und zum Walde kehrt,
 Er schleppt des Gefängnisses Schmach
 Noch ein Stückchen des Fadens nach:
 Er ist der alte freigeborne Vogel nicht,
 Er hat schon jemand angehört.

Lili, I flee from thee! . . . like a bird that breaks its cord and returns to the wood. It drags after it a bit of cord, the disgrace

of the prison. It is no longer the old free-born bird; it has belonged to some one.

To himself, in a quatrain of moving simplicity, he confided the price he was paying for freedom from social conformity:

Holde Lili, warst so lang
All mein Lust und all mein Sang,
Bist ach nun all mein Schmerz, und doch
All mein Sang bist du noch.

Fair Lili, who wert so long
All my joy and all my song,
Now thou art all my pain, yet now
Still all my song art thou.



The fragmentary manuscript of *Faust* Goethe took with him to Weimar shows the height of the twenty-six-year-old poet's revolt against rationalism and conventionality. The middle-aged scholar, seated at his desk in a vaulted Gothic chamber, surrounded by books and scientific instruments, admits the fruitlessness of his long quest for knowledge. He has sacrificed youth, wealth and worldly position, to gain only the negative satisfaction of release from superstitious fear of Hell while advancing no nearer his goal of discovering the unifying principle of the world. Like Herder on his voyage to Nantes, he is surfeited with mere words. In despair, he tries the short-cut of magic. He contemplates the occult sign of the macrocosm, only to acknowledge the incapacity of the human mind to grasp the harmonious flow of the forces that bind "infinite Nature" into unity. Hoping to reach something nearer his capacity, he summons the Spirit of the Earth to satisfy his desire "to bear all Earth's pain and happiness." The Spirit, appearing as a flame to sing a beautiful hymn of the perpetual cycle of life from birth to death and from death to birth, rebukes his pretension to be a "superman" with the withering comment: "Thou art like the spirit thou comprehendest, not

me!" Faust's humiliation is somewhat lightened when his subordinate Wagner, an insatiable seeker for knowledge on a lower plane, enters. He has mistaken Faust's loud tones for the reading of Greek tragedy, and has come to learn the proper mode of declamation. Faust explains in Herder's inspired and scornful manner how to read without rhetorical rules, by interpreting from the heart.

Without preparation, Mephistopheles appears. He is a vulgar tempter to sensual pleasure, who translates his maxim,

Grau, theuer Freund, ist alle Theorie
Und grün des Lebens goldener Baum,

Gray, dear friend, is all theory
And green the golden tree of life,

into practice by leading the dissatisfied scholar among drunken revelers in Auerbach's Cellar at Leipzig, and by suggesting the seduction of a girl they pass in the street, the fourteen-year-old Gretchen, in a tone of tired gallantry that has to whip up appetite. Faust, who has yearned to refresh his brain in moonlight and dew, sees in love for this unspoiled child of nature restoration of his youth. A garden scene presenting alternately the conversation of promenading pairs, Faust and Gretchen, Mephistopheles and her neighbor Martha, enforces the contrast of love with sensual intrigue. The Gretchen scenes, obviously indebted to *Hamlet*, follow as in the final version of *Faust*. Gretchen's transgressing of sex convention is defended as obedience to nature, but her lover is delivered up to pangs of remorse for having temporarily forgotten her while following Mephistopheles's lead into other pleasures—vehement remorse Goethe had felt in his abandonment of Friederike. From Faust's despairing exclamation:

Ha! bin ich nicht der Flüchtling, Unbehauste,
Der Unmensch ohne Zweck und Ruh,
Der wie ein Wassersturz von Fels zu Felsen brauste,
Begeirig wüthend nach dem Abgrund zu?

. . . .

Mags schnell geschehn was muss geschehn!
Mag ihr Geschick auf mich zusammen stürzen,
Und sie mit mir zu Grunde gehn!

Ha! am I not the fugitive, the homeless
Man without human ties or goal or rest,
Who like a cataract from cliff to cliff
Roared in mad greedy flight to the abyss?

.

May that come speedily which must come!
May her fate fall in with mine, and she
Companion me to ruin!

and from his disappearance with Mephistopheles at the end of the play while Gretchen calls vainly, it is clear that Goethe saw no happy solution to Faust's problem. His naturalism causes a quick descent of Faust's desires from the metaphysical to the physical. But in Weimar the germ of the opening soliloquy was to grow into a great philosophical poem.

The Duchy of Weimar, a typical German state, had a population of 95,000. Weimar was a market town of 6,000, in the wide valley of the sluggish Ilm. On the heights closing the horizon, forests stood thick about the Duke's hunting manors of Ettersberg and Belvedere. Thatched houses crowded within the town walls about two foci, the market square and the Ducal palace, then in process of rebuilding after a fire. A simpler, poorer land than Goethe had imagined from the luxury of the court it maintained. Nothing, however, could exceed the hospitality of the Duke, who gave the poet's warm blood free play in hunting parties, drinking bouts and casual love affairs. For months his life was a constant round of pleasure, with employment only in lending his pen to the Duke's mother for light theatricals and decorative masques. But he could not long remain unaware of the censoriousness of the small town, in which no movement of the Duke's new favorite escaped observation. The court, mindful of precedence, murmured at the easy naturalness of the Duke's manner toward a

commoner. When Goethe was given a salaried post in the government as a means of attaching him permanently to Weimar, the Prime Minister threatened to resign.

Charlotte von Stein, wife of the Master of Stables, warned the poet of the bad impression reckless riding about with the Duke, oaths and plebeian expressions before ladies, uncereemonious manners and satiric tongue were making. Spoiled by his hitherto easy ascendancy over women, he left her without a word. But within a week he had made his peace. For Frau von Stein was not like the middle-class girls in their 'teens he had dominated. An aristocrat seven years his senior, who read his complex character with surprising accuracy, she seemed to have known him in some previous existence. Not beautiful, and exhausted from the birth of seven children, she offered in her serene wisdom the repose his stormy nature had unconsciously been craving. Adroitly, she induced the fugitive from Lili's salon gradually to slough off student and hunting field manners and to learn court etiquette. As their relationship developed into love, he even yielded to the secrecy, repellent to his frank habits, of a liaison in the French manner; and for five years she put him under still greater strain by refusing physical union. Under her influence Goethe led the Duke into soberer ways and took his own part in the government with increasing seriousness, curbing the extravagance of the court and the army, encouraging industries and mining, and liberalizing the Church by calling Herder to be its head. Seven years after his arrival, he accepted the responsibility of the Treasurership, and with it a patent of nobility that smoothed his way at court. The individualist had become the conscientious, active public official; the advocate of spontaneity had acquired great self-control.

These crowded years uniting the roles of official and of court favorite and entertainer, though retarding ambitious poetic work like *Faust*, left their spiritual diary in lyrics, the finest and most varied of Goethe's career. The distractions of the

first Weimar months and the disturbing pull of a new affection when the ache of separation from Lili was sharp, drew from the hitherto insatiable lover of life a prayer for peace worthy of Dante:

Der du von dem Himmel bist,
Alles Leid und Schmerzen stillest,
Den, der doppelt elend ist,
Doppelt mit Erquickung füllest,
Ach ich bin des Treibens müde!
Was soll all der Schmerz und Lust?
Süsser Friede,
Komm, ach komm in meine Brust!

Thou from Heaven who stillest
All sorrow and pain,
And the doubly wretched fillest
With double renewal again,
Alas, I am weary of striving!
For what all the pain and the yearning?
Sweet Peace, returning
Come, O come into my breast!

Its title, "Wandrer's Nachtlied," reveals a wry remembrance of the sheer love of activity he had poured forth five years before in "Wandrer's Sturmlied."

Goethe almost lost confidence in the Destiny which, after guiding him triumphantly, had shut him in "this narrow little world"; though to his family and friends who had endeavored to hold him in Frankfurt he addressed the stirring allegory "Seefahrt", in which a pilot in a tempest holds doggedly to his self-determined course. Fate seemed playing with him dubiously by giving in Frau von Stein the perfect mate who could not be his. The verse epistle "Warum gabst du uns die tiefen Blicke?" addressed to her on April 14, 1776, mingles inescapable pain with profound joy. Unable to banish the anxieties forever circling in his mind, he uttered the resigned prayer that marks the beginning of his maturity:

Willst du mich nicht glücklich machen,
Sorge, so mach mich klug.

If you will not make me happy,
Care, then make me wise.

A year later this wish had become conviction that an infinite capacity for sorrow and for joy was given to certain souls as a sign of their election by Fate. Four solemnly moving lines express this certainty with repetitions which add untranslatable subtleties to the meaning:

Alles geben die Götter, die unendlichen,
Ihren Lieblingen ganz,
Alle Freuden, die unendlichen,
Alle Schmerzen, die unendlichen, ganz.

All things the gods, the immortals,
Give to their darling whole;
All joys, the immortals,
All sorrows, the immortals, whole.

In advancing up the path of self-discipline, Goethe freed his verse from preoccupation with his own emotions and fate, and turned to interpret those of others. In December, 1777, on a visit to the Harz Mountains to rid himself of melancholy, he opened his heart in the gravely cadenced "Harzreise im Winter" to pray for those unfavored by fortune, exposed to life's bitter winds, lost in its wastes. Two years later the "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern" (Song of the Spirits over the Waters) resumed the analogy of a stream descending to the sea that had served Mohamet's joyous song of gathering power, to convey a sad theme by following still farther the course of water. Its return from the sea to the clouds and thence to the highlands is like the cyclic process of human life, which only the winds of Fate diversify into individual waves. Having learned that Fate might restrain even genius, he wrote as a possibly conscious response to his "Prometheus" the nobly resigned "Grenzen der Menschheit" (Bounds of Humanity,

1778; 1781). Here the narrow limits of existence, the insignificance of the individual in the history of the race, are compensated by vision of the grandeur of the gods:

Wenn der uralte
Heilige Vater
Mit gelassener Hand
Aus rollenden Wolken
Segnende Blitze
Über die Erde sät,
Küss' ich den letzten
Saum seines Kleides,
Kindliche Schauer
Treu in der Brust.

Denn mit Göttern
Soll sich nicht messen
Irgend ein Mensch.
Hebt er sich aufwärts
Und berührt
Mit dem Scheitel die Sterne,
Nirgends haften dann
Die unsichern Sohlen,
Und mit ihm spielen
Wolken und Winde.

Steht er mit festen
Markigen Knochen
Auf der wohlbegründeten
Daurenden Erde,
Reicht er nicht auf,
Nur mit der Eiche
Oder der Rebe
Sich zu vergleichen.

Was unterscheidet
Götter von Menschen?
Das viele Wellen
Vor jenen wandeln,
Ein ewiger Strom:
Uns hebt die Welle,
Verschlingt die Welle,
Und wir versinken.

Ein kleiner Ring
Begrenzt unser Leben,
Und viele Geschlechter
Reihen sich dauernd
An ihres Daseins
Unendliche Kette.

When the Ancient of Days,
The holy Father,
With indifferent hand
From rolling clouds
Blessing lightnings
Sows over the earth,
I kiss the lowest
Hem of his garments,
Childish awe
Still in my breast.

For with gods
No man may vie.
God rises and touches
The stars with his forehead,
His unsupported feet
Then have no weight,
And with him play
Clouds and winds.

He stands with firm
Pithy bones
On the well-established
Enduring earth,
He reaches upward
Only to liken himself
To the oak or the vine.

What distinguishes
Gods from men?
That many waves
Move before them,
An eternal stream.
Us the wave lifts,
The wave swallows,
And we sink forever.

A narrow round
Confines our life
And many generations
Link themselves ever
On the endless chain
Of their existence.

The Northern tradition Goethe continued to exploit by steeping himself in folk superstition to produce "Der Fischer" (The Fisherman, 1778), an unsentimental, objective anticipation of Heine's "Lorelei," and the unforgettable "Erkönig" (1781; 1782), suggested by a Danish ballad in Herder's collection, *Stimmen der Völker* (Voices of the Peoples, 1778). The "Erkönig" (King of the Elves) is convincing dramatization of the primitive dread of sickness as the work of some malevolent spirit. Set in the misty darkness of a Northern forest, the poem is a triumph of sympathetic imagination; a triumph the greater because Goethe was not a man of the people with folklore in his blood, but a highly cultivated burgher in an aristocratic environment. These superb ballads are *tours de force*.

Goethe with maturing years drew away from primitive and mediaeval Germany. Contemporary Germany, whose most interesting aspect, a restive middle class, energetic, intellectually eager, he was portraying in his novel *Wilhelm Meister*, seemed too raw, too shallow, too lacking in dignity to offer material for poetry. What the aristocracy and its scattered miniature courts had to offer, he knew too well from Weimar. His Northern inspiration began to narrow to his lyrics. Fresh, sincere, various in theme and form, these had been his best work hitherto; they remain unexcelled in European poetry. But with the approach of middle life lyric occasions became less frequent and less intense. His manifold Weimar duties brought moments of exhaustion, such as that in which, lying alone in the hunting lodge at Ilmenau to watch darkness fall on September 6, 1780, he had written on its plank wall:

Über allen Gipfeln
Ist Ruh,
In allen Wipfeln
Spürest du
Kaum einen Hauch;
Die Vögelein schweigen im Walde.
Warte nur, balde
Ruhest du auch.

Over all the hilltops
Is rest,
In all the treetops
Thou feelest
Scarce a breeze;
The birds are stilled in the forest.
Only wait, soon like these
Thou too shalt rest.

The resigned, sad wisdom of this perfect wedding of German words to atmosphere and thought was written in the same spot as "Rastlose Liebe" (Restless Love) seven years before.

The questioning of the Fate which had led him to the narrow world of Weimar returned to torment him. Goethe longed for change, for the richer cultural traditions, the splendid monuments of the past that were the heritage of the Italians, the French, the English. He felt the incompleteness which had turned the glances of so many German artists southward, Dürer to visit Venice, Bach to steep himself in Palestrina. He knew only south-central Germany, Alsace, Switzerland. At the age of thirty-seven, he had still not seen the sea. Twice from the Alps he had gazed longingly into Italy. Twice he had been held back by affections and duties. His blood stirred at the magic name of Rome that had drawn so many rulers to waste the blood and substance of his race in wars beyond the Alps for what proved in the end to be the empty title of Holy Roman Emperor. Was not Frankfurt, an Imperial city, a direct heir to that Latin culture whose very ruins had been potent to revive civilization in modern Europe? And beyond Rome lay

an alluring and shadowy Greece. Mediterranean culture now seemed quite as much his heritage as the Northern which Herder had disclosed. He had seen the North through Herder's eyes. Now he saw the South through the eyes of Winckelmann as the home of the ancient art whose "noble simplicity and quiet greatness" floated serenely above confused, commonplace Germany. Even into *Wilhelm Meister* slipped the idealized Mignon with her homesick song, "Kennst du das Land wo die Citronen blühn?" (Knowest Thou the Land Where the Lemon Trees Bloom?). Under leaden skies he yearned for the clear outlines, the sun-drenched luxuriance of Italy. His training in drawing demanded composition which the German landscape—forest, marsh, dull plain, and misty heights—stubbornly refused. He had never forgotten the momentary peace that had come, after his fear-smitten flight from Wetzlar, in the Mannheim Museum among plaster casts of antique sculpture.

As his thirty-seventh birthday passed, the call southward was irresistible. The Duke's recent military alliance with bellicose Prussia was placing in jeopardy the material prosperity Goethe had worked unremittingly to secure for Weimar. Physically he was fagged; his senses starved. Frau von Stein, in her mid-forties, was drawing him prematurely into a world of paramount comfort and duty. Fearing that she and the Duke might hold him back, he made the pretext of a holiday in Germany to leave Weimar in the autumn of 1786. His feverish descent to Rome was urged alike by flight and by eagerness.



Two years later, Goethe returned rejuvenated, like Faust in the witch's kitchen scene he had written in Rome. Italian skies and manners had freed his senses. From following Winckelmann's footsteps among antiquities and associating with the cosmopolitan artistic colony at Rome, he had gone back to the conception of poetry as a self-conscious art built upon care-

fully planned composition of details clearly presented to the eye. Somehow he had expected his Weimar friends to understand the new self which had restored his happiness. Except for the unregenerate Duke, they were unresponsive; Herder rooted in his Northern taste and Frau von Stein chilly. In defiance of Weimar tongues he took into his garden house and later into his dignified residence on the Frauenplan Christiane Vulpius, a vigorously animal, almost illiterate young mistress. Estrangement from Frau von Stein became complete.

The spiritual history of his first stay in Weimar, now a closed chapter, he put into two dramas in his new style. *Iphigenie auf Tauris*, in a prose version since 1779 but versified in Italy, represents his early Weimar years. The fate-pursued, passion-tossed Orestes (Goethe) is freed from an ancestral curse by the purifying influence of his virginal sister Iphigenia (Frau von Stein). *Torquato Tasso*, paying Frau von Stein a debt of gratitude for initiation into court manners, also poses the more general problem of the relation of the untutored genius to the aristocracy which patronizes him. The poet Tasso's hypersensitivity, vanity, and lack of *savoir faire* put him to disadvantage in competing for the favor of the ruling family of Ferrara against the coolly collected Antonio, a diplomat and man of the world who is to some extent the second self Goethe had acquired through his official experience. But the final act, written after the return to unsympathetic Weimar, tips the scale back toward Tasso; for the princess, in regard to whom he has been guilty only of an impulsive infringement of aristocratic taboo, abandons him with cool composure. Goethe's intellect remained on the side of the courtier he had become, but he gave his emotions and imagination leave to protest against what Weimar had done to the young genius of 1775. Ironically, in the year of the completion of *Torquato Tasso*, 1789, the aristocratic world to which Goethe had reconciled himself by doing violence to part of his nature was shaken at its center. Revolution broke out in France.

In turning to Mediterranean themes and art, Goethe abandoned the attempt to complete his most ambitious work in the Northern manner. In 1790 he published *Faust*, to which he had been adding scenes intermittently in Weimar and in Italy, with the subtitle: *A Fragment*. Its structure had been clarified, and philosophical and social possibilities of the theme revealed through development of the characters of Faust and Mephistopheles.

No longer a mere sensual tempter, Mephistopheles proposes to Faust: "We shall see the little, and then the great world." To the realm of human experience will be added the universe of the spirit. Faust objects that he is qualified for neither, being too old to enter fully into human joys, and (fresh from the snub of the Earth Spirit) small before the superhuman. The tempter offers rejuvenation in the witch's kitchen. Faust, true son of the Enlightenment, sneers at the mediaeval hocus-pocus over the caldron. Mephistopheles replies wisely that the best way to recover zest for life is to toil like a peasant. But Faust cannot overcome the European intellectual's prejudice against using the hands: whereupon Mephistopheles says dryly that there is no escaping the caldron then. Yet the failure of the witch to recognize Mephistopheles immediately reveals that he, too, has yielded to the Enlightenment:

Auch die Cultur, die alle Welt beleckt,
 Hat auf den Teufel sich erstreckt;
 Das Nordische Phantom ist nun nicht mehr zu schauen.
 Wo siehst du Hörner, Schweif und Klauen?

. . . .

Ich bin ein Cavalier, wie andre Cavaliere.

Culture, that has spread thin over the earth,
 Even to the Devil has proved its worth;
 The Nordic phantom you can no longer see.
 Do you find horns, and tail, and claws on me?

. . . .

I am a cavalier, like other cavaliers.

By this stroke of genius Goethe opened fresh possibilities for his theme. Mephistopheles becomes the antitype for Faust, an aristocrat with a veneer of French culture.

A vision in the witch's mirror of a woman too beautiful for earth prepares for Faust's seduction of Gretchen, who is the earthly counterpart promised by Mephistopheles, cynically secure that the magic potion will make him see Helen in every woman. Mephistopheles's equal confidence that the insatiability of Faust's desires would have brought his ruin even if he had not given himself to the Devil shifts the center of interest from Gretchen; for her abandonment is only one instance of insatiability. Having been imprisoned in a static and dead Newtonian world, Faust fears ever to fix his desires. He becomes the symbol and the victim of the new conception of a continual flux in time.

Alone among forest caverns, Faust utters a noble thanksgiving to the Earth Spirit, who through Mephistopheles's intercession has relented and permitted him to rediscover man's unity with nature:

Erhabner Geist, du gabst mir, gabst mir alles
 Warum ich bath. Du hast mir nicht umsonst
 Dein Angesicht im Feuer zugewendet.
 Gabst mir die herrliche Natur zum Königreich,
 Kraft sie zu fühlen, zu geniessen. Nicht
 Kalt staunenden Besuch erlaubst du nur,
 Vergönnest mir in ihre tiefe Brust,
 Wie in den Busen eines Freunds, zu schauen.
 Du führst die Reihe der Lebendigen
 Vor mir vorbei, und lehrst mich meine Brüder
 Im stillen Busch, in Luft und Wasser kennen.

. . . .

Und steigt vor meinem Blick der reine Mond
 Besänftigend herüber, schweben mir
 Von Felsenwänden, aus dem feuchten Busch
 Der Vorwelt silberne Gestalten auf,
 Und lindern der Betrachtung strenge Lust.

Noble Spirit, thou gavest me all,
All that I asked for. Not in vain hast thou
Turned thy fiery countenance upon me.
Thou gavest me glorious Nature as a kingdom
And strength to feel her and enjoy her.
Not cold wondering survey allowed me,
But let me gaze into her inmost bosom,
As if it were the bosom of a friend.
Thou ledest all living things to pass before me,
Teachest me to know my brothers of the air,
The quiet thicket and the running water.

. . . .

And when the pure appeasing moon comes up,
Silvery forms from the prehistoric world
Steal forth from thickets and from sheer cliff walls
And quench my eager thirst for contemplation.

Upon such exultation obtrudes the thought that sublime joy which brings him "nearer and nearer to the gods" has been his only through the mediation of Mephistopheles, henceforth his inescapable dread companion. With a word Mephisto can humble him and bring that joy to naught. He kindles Faust's desires only for the diabolic pleasure of seeing how every satisfaction palls and arouses painful yearning. From soliloquy upon the vision of this evil from without and torture from within, Faust is roused by the physical presence of Mephistopheles, who cannily asks if he isn't getting bored with a hermit's life. Irritated at this reading of his thoughts, Faust rails at the interruption of his meditation. But Mephistopheles, as a rococo gentleman, is sincere in failing to understand delight in solitude with nature. He parodies Faust's claim to transcend in such communion human finiteness. Faust professes bored superiority, but is brought to heel by mention of the deserted Marguerite. Images of her loneliness and sorrow break the lingering spell of spiritual upliftment, and, as in the early manuscript, he curses the restlessness which has involved an innocent girl in his inevitable destruction.

The *Fragment* closes with two Gretchen scenes: her prayer to the Virgin and her fainting before the converging menaces of the Evil Spirit and the unrelenting "Dies Irae." But the emphasis has been shifted from the problem of sex and society to the absorbing combat of Faust and Mephistopheles, extremes of two temperaments and modes of life dividing the eighteenth century against itself. A philosophic poem has half emerged. The publication of the *Fragment*, however, made no stir. Goethe was approaching fifty when the full philosophic possibilities of his theme were urged upon him by the more abstractly minded Schiller. Reluctantly taking leave of his clear Mediterranean dreams to retrace the "cloudy and misty way" of his Teutonic youth, he spurred himself to finish *Faust* in 1797; but he withheld it from publication until 1808.

The completion was even then incomplete, for it had become the first part of a larger whole * implied in a grand Prologue in Heaven. Probing into the problem of Faust's character had widened the drama from a conflict of two eighteenth-century points of view to the universal theme of the function of evil in the world. The invention of Mephistopheles's wager with God and parallel pact with Faust, by providing a definite goal for the action, offered the possibility of an artistic unity. At the close of this Part One it is clear that Faust is to be saved, though the manner of salvation is left in suspense. Salvation is to be understood in no dogmatic sense, for Goethe borrows from Christianity only convenient symbols such as he had borrowed from other cults in Mohamet and Ganymede. In opposition to Mephistopheles's sweeping negation of human worth, God chooses Faust as a test case of the capacity of the individual to develop through trial and error. By this emphasis on development, on becoming, the drama continues its original revolt against the static Newtonian world. The constant companionship of the Devil with man, which drew the agonized question in Faust's soliloquy in the caves, is explained as a

* The Second Part of *Faust* was published posthumously in 1833.

necessary spur to human activity, to the eternal process of becoming.

To the main body of the drama the most important addition is the enrichment of the character of Faust. In the hands of the forty-eight-year-old Goethe, he becomes for the first time wholly the figure of the legend, middle-aged and acutely conscious of the psychological problems of physical decline. Wagner restores his confidence after the disappearance of the Earth Spirit only temporarily. When left alone, he unconsciously echoes Mephistopheles from the Prologue in likening man to a worm. As a man grows older, he is limited by what he has done; his feelings are torpid, cares beset him, books and experience reveal the rarity of happiness. Faust decides upon poison to prove his courage and, unaided, to widen his experience by passing the portals of death. Easter bells and choral song breaking in hold him back, not by restoring Christian faith, but by recalling the joys and hopes of youth. This regret of youth, that will be frequent in the new poetry stressing feeling rather than intellect, leads naturally into a scene filled with Goethe's memories of Frankfurt. Faust and Wagner join the Easter holiday in the country of a populace long pent within city walls and narrow streets, Faust divided sadly from the merry-makers by his social class and his years. In his worn body Spring fans the embers of feeling, and he has indefinable longing:

Doch ist es jedem eingeboren,
Das sein Gefühl hinauf und vorwärts dringt,
Wenn über uns, im blauen Raum verloren,
Ihr schmetternd Lied die Lerche singt;
Wenn über schroffen Fichtenhöhen
Der Adler ausgebreitet schwebt,
Und über Flächen, über Seen
Der Kranich nach der Heimat strebt.

Yet it is innate in every man alive
That on and up his feelings strive,
When, lost in the blue void, the lark's song pours,

When over pine-clad heights the eagle soars
 With wings outspread,
 And over waters, over plains
 The crane on toward his homeland strains.

To his companion, who can find analogous exaltation only in books, Faust explains his divided nature:

Zwei Seelen wohnen, ach! in meiner Brust,
 Die eine will sich von der andern trennen;
 Die eine hält, in derber Liebeslust,
 Sich an die Welt mit klammernden Organen;
 Die andre hebt gewaltsam sich vom Dust
 Zu den Gefilden hoher Ahnen.

Two souls, alas! dwell in my breast,
 One will not with the other rest;
 One clings with sturdy lust
 Of clasping senses to the earth;
 The other rises mighty from the dust
 Into the fields of higher aspiration.

On their return to the city, the mediaeval atmosphere and gathering darkness are the appropriate setting for a strangely behaving poodle that follows Faust to his room and discloses himself as Mephistopheles. His abstract significance he describes as

Ein Teil von jener Kraft,
 Die stets das Böse will und stets das Gute schafft.

A part of that force
 Which ever evil wills and ever good performs.

The pact is delayed until another scene. Mephistopheles reappears as a young gallant, willing to show "what life offers." Faust replies that such adventures come too late, and lays bare the tortures of his time of life, which make him long for death. Mephistopheles mockingly points out that after all he has not drunk poison; a taunt which lashes Faust into a fearful curse

on all that holds not only him but all men to life. Careless of a future existence of which he can know nothing, he defies Mephistopheles to give one earthly joy that is not deceptive, one in which he may rest content. His confidence in the insatiability of his nature, which is his torment, is ground for his assurance of winning the wager. Mephistopheles, quite as sure of the irresistibility of material delights, readily consents. Whereupon begins the duel of temperaments, representing the spiritual division of the early and the late eighteenth century, between as original and possibly as immortal a pair of recurring human types as Don Quixote and Sancho Panza.

At the very outset, Mephistopheles misunderstands Faust's desire and must be corrected:

Du hörst ja, von Freud ist nicht die Rede.
Dem Taumel weih ich mich, dem schmerzlichen Genuss,
Verliebt dem Hass, erquickendem Verdruss.
Mein Busen, der von Wissensdrang geheilt ist,
Soll keinen Schmerzen künftig sich verschliessen,
Und was der ganzen Menschheit zugeteilt ist,
Will ich in meinem innern Selbst geniessen.

Listen, joy doesn't enter in. I vow
Myself to ecstasy, to the most painful pleasure,
Beloved hate, refreshing disgust. For now
My bosom, healed of zeal for learning without measure,
Will henceforth shut itself to no pain,
And all that can befall mankind I fain
Would feel within my deepest self.

Bewildered by such paradoxes of human feeling, Mephistopheles shifts to safe ground by pointing out that the latter part of Faust's wish is attainable only by a god; for his strong point is hard-headed perception of human limitations. And so the debate proceeds. Mephistopheles brings the dreamer with a thud to earth, but Faust always springs up with some unexpected perception or desire. The dialogue, various, sprightly, and pro-

foundly wise, overlays the original kernel of the Gretchen story, which in close dependence on Shakespeare is rounded out to a conventional ending.

The greatness of this First Part of *Faust* arises from the slow accretion of years. The lyrical monodrama of the Frankfurt manuscript acquires dramatic objectivity when the protestations of Faust meet the formidable negations of Mephistopheles. The play includes the naturalistic revolt of the poet's twenties, the Weimar lesson in the counter-arguments of society, the memories of Leipzig that developed the character of Mephistopheles, and the tragic dilemmas of middle age. These successive strata were never neatly pressed together. *Faust* is left like a Gothic cathedral built at different epochs. The latest accretions are possibly the greatest. At forty-eight Goethe had wisdom and sure constructive power without having lost lyric intensity or variety, whether in the laments of youth in the Prologue or in the frustration of an aging body, which Faust confesses. What Herder had claimed for the melodic possibilities of German, *Faust* fulfills from the majesty of the opening chorus of angels to the enchanting lightness of Goethe's favorite dimeters with which spirits lull Faust asleep.



In 1786, when Goethe's flight to Italy was depriving Herder of the foremost adherent to his doctrines, the conception of poetry as the voice of a people had a striking illustration across the North Sea. A tenant farmer, Robert Burns, defeated in wresting from the soil of western Scotland a heavy rent and his living, published a volume of verse to help defray the expense of his emigration to the West Indies. Its quality amazed Edinburgh drawing rooms. On the discovery that a love song which caught his fancy had actually been composed by a neighbor of his own class, Burns in the local dialect had written to the unknown John Lapraik a verse epistle quivering with excitement:

Thought I, can this be Pope, or Steele,
Or Beattie's wark?
They tauld me 'twas an odd kind chiel
About Muirkirk.

After this handsome compliment, he introduced himself as a fellow-poet, whose experience challenged the convention that a poet must be learned:

Your critic folk may cock their nose,
And say, 'How can you e'er propose,
You wha ken hardly verse frae prose,
To mak a sang?'
But by your leave, my learned foes,
Ye're maybe wrang.

. . . .

Gie me ae spark o' Nature's fire,
That's a' the learning I desire;
Then tho' I drudge thro' dub an' mire
At pleugh or cart,
My Muse, though hamely in attire,
May touch the heart.

The creed Herder had attained by prodigious reading is expressed as if by instinct.

Burns derived from a tradition of Scottish popular poetry unbroken from the Middle Ages to Robert Fergusson's volume of 1773. Burns's earliest compositions were set to folk tunes sung in the harvest field and at festivals. "John Barleycorn," the apotheosis of Scotch drink, is a far-away echo of the prehistoric ritual of the slain god. "Tam o'Shanter" (1790), which adds to atmosphere humor, ghastliness, and gentle melancholy in a Gothic medley achieving triumphantly a unified impression, surpasses Goethe in the handling of folk superstition. But if the primitive was in the poet's blood, he had had the elementary education which since 1696 had been giving Scotland the most intelligent lower class in a Europe whose manual labor was done almost universally by illiterates. Burns's dis-

claimer of learning must be qualified by his knowledge of Shakespeare, Milton, and Pope.

Therein lay his tragedy. For economically he was living in a rut intended for dull boors. Without self-pity or desire to escape into another class, Burns in contemplating land

Where hundreds labor to support
A haughty lordling's pride

transmuted a recollection from Young's *Night Thoughts* into the memorable phrase, "man's inhumanity to man." His sympathy was so wide as to include the plight of the mouse made homeless and the daisy uprooted by his plow, and even of the Devil in a burning Hell. The young rebel's sociability, in contrast to Goethe's early antisocial Titanism, grew from the need of the humble for mutual assistance against niggardly and inclement nature as well as against exploiting fellow men. "Auld Lang Syne," the perfect hymn of reunion, has a somber background of roaring and estranging seas. Burns at twenty-nine could express the ever-deepening love of a peasant pair in a long life of hardship together in "John Anderson, my Jo," a lyric whose tone, language and imagery have a harmony seldom achieved by more conscious art. "The Jolly Beggars" (1785; 1799) in irresistible rhythms of folks tunes reveals the gusto and bravado of dregs of humanity gathered in a low alehouse. The best of his love songs, such as "Ye Banks and Braes o' Bonnie Doon," the concentrated tragedy in "Ae Fond Kiss":

Had we never loved sae kindly,
Had we never loved sae blindly,
Never met—or never parted,
We had ne'er been broken hearted,

and the chivalrously tender "O Wert Thou in the Cauld Blast," written on Burns's death bed in 1796, are unsurpassed in spontaneity and depth of feeling.

In 1783, three years before Burns's first volume, there had

arisen in London a quiet sigh to the Muses at their desertion of England:

How have you left the ancient love
The bards of old desired in you!
The languid strings do scarcely move!
The sound is forc'd, the notes are few!

Poetical Sketches were from the pen of an engraver so unconcerned with a literary audience that they had been published only at the urgency and the expense of two admirers. Self-educated, William Blake had escaped the current models of the Popian school and had steeped himself in the King James version of the Bible, Spenser, and the Elizabethan dramatists, which together with ballads current in his social class encouraged an unwonted freshness and boldness of imagery. An engaging simplicity and subtle variations of rhythm disclosed an original personality. Blake was eccentric to the verge of what the stolid call madness. Absorbed in splendid visions and content with the simple life of the lower middle class, he was completely oblivious of conventional opinion. In 1788 or 1789, his unguided reading fell upon two mystical books that fired his imagination, Swedenborg's *Wisdom of the Angels*, and *Aphorisms on Man* by Lavater, Goethe's friend in the period of his genius cult. These influenced two of the most beautiful and suggestive volumes of lyrics in English, *Songs of Innocence* (1789) and *Songs of Experience* (1794). Even the outward form of these volumes was arrestingly original; for Blake combined his talents in inventing "illuminated printing," whereby hand-etched letterpress was accompanied by illustrations tinted with water colors, a harmony of the arts that had disappeared from bookmaking since the Middle Ages. The restriction on the number of copies by this laborious rejection of the printing press was possibly the chief reason why these books had few readers until almost a century had passed.

The companion volumes, contrasting innocence and experi-

ence, explore the fundamental contradictions of human nature. In the first, poetry, hitherto concerned almost exclusively with adults, enters, with a simplicity that is never inane, into the world of a fortunate child, a paradise of joy and love without bounds of race or creed. All nature is friendly and gay, and man is made in the Divine image:

Mercy has a human heart,
Pity a human face,
And Love, the human form divine,
And Peace, the human dress.

For man and nature are in the hands of the good and ever-watchful God who created the lamb as his symbol, who cares for the little black boy and the orphaned chimney sweep, and makes sure that the little boy lost becomes the little boy found. Play begins at dawn on the echoing green, and at sunset little hearts still insatiate reply to the indulgent nurse:

No, no, let us play, for it is yet day,
And we cannot go to sleep;
Besides, in the sky the little birds fly,
And the hills are all covered with sheep.

In *Songs of Experience*, the world discloses itself fully to the almost incredulous gaze of advancing years. The symbolic lamb gives place to the tiger, also God's creature, before which the poet stands amazed at the dread fascination and mystery of ruthless power. Nature includes the equally devouring force of sex, clad in the surpassingly beautiful symbol of the sick rose:

O Rose, thou art sick!
The invisible worm
That flies in the night,
In the howling storm,
Has found out thy bed
Of crimson joy;
And his dark secret love
Does thy life destroy.

The unwilling hand that drew the curtain from nature draws it from human society, epitomized in the all-too-familiar London:

I wander thro' each charter'd street,
Near where the charter'd Thames doth flow,
And mark in every face I meet
Marks of weakness, marks of woe.

In every cry of every Man,
In every Infants' cry of fear,
In every voice, in every ban,
The mind-forg'd manacles I hear.

How the chimney sweeper's cry
Every blackening church appals;
And the hapless soldier's sigh
Runs in blood down palace walls.

But most thro' midnight streets I hear
How the youthful harlot's curse
Blasts the new-born infant's tear,
And blights with plagues the marriage hearse.

To this appalling concentrated indictment, such as Goethe shrank from giving even to Werther's most despairing moments, Blake adds the Faustian attack in the name of Nature on abstract intellectualism ("The Voice of the Ancient Bard," "The Schoolboy") and on sexual convention ("A Little Girl Lost"). But he makes no Rousseauistic distinction between man in the state of nature and man corrupted by society. The origin of evil he explores in the labyrinth of the human heart; in the venom bred by suppressed desires ("The Poison Tree") and in the seemingly inescapable hardening of the heart with age, which expels the Guardian Angel. These evil growths seek to disguise themselves in hypocrisy, the ultimate human corruption, whose subtle workings are traced in "The Human Abstract":

Pity would be no more
If we did not make somebody poor;

And Mercy no more could be
If all were as happy as we.

The nurse reappears to call, in sad summary of experience:

Then come home, children, the sun is gone down
And the dews of night arise.
Your spring and your day are wasted in play
And your winter and night in disguise.

The shrinking of sensitive souls from this vision of life and nature, Blake describes in symbolism and music that cause half-forgetfulness of their import:

Ah, Sunflower! weary of time,
Who countest the steps of the sun;
Seeking after that sweet golden clime,
Where the traveller's journey is done;

Where the Youth, pined away with desire,
And the pale Virgin, shrouded in snow,
Arise from their graves, and aspire
Where my Sunflower wishes to go.

But Blake's own mind embraces the dual vision of innocence and experience in accepting the world that presents a fundamental riddle of temperament represented in "The Clod and the Pebble":

'Love seeketh not itself to please
Nor for itself has any care,
But for another gives its ease,
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair.'

Thus sung a little Clod of Clay,
Trodden with the cattle's feet,
But a Pebble of the brook
Warbled out these metres meet:

'Love seeketh only Self to please,
To bind another to its delight,
Joys in another's loss of ease,
And builds a Hell in Heaven's despite.'

Like the young Goethe of "Eagle and Dove," he cannot dismiss as useless the demonic element; society must learn to utilize the positive value of the pebble as well as the Christian virtue of the clod.

Blake saw that Milton had sensed this in creating the Satan of *Paradise Lost*, though religious scruples had kept him from what might have been a unified interpretation of life. Blake, like Goethe in the Second Part of *Faust* (1833), attempted a new theology which would be as adequate as that of the Greeks or of Dante. The impressive first sketch in the prose *Marriage of Heaven and Hell* (1790) engendered terminology that in his Prophetic Books unfortunately loses contact with the usual reader of poetry. This, the most valiant endeavor of an English poet to set forth a coherent vision of a post-Christian era, failed to employ communicable symbols. The aloofness of Blake's spirit is his weakness and his strength. Happily the Songs lie open to all. Something of the cause of the vigor of "The Tiger," the concentrated impact of "London" may be traced in manuscript variants that reveal how Blake blotted and filed to bring to perfection what he claimed to have set down at the dictation of spirits. But the ultimate secrets of the creative process still escape into the impenetrable realm of what we must be content to call genius. The flaming Devil in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* proclaimed Blake's creed: "The worship of God is: Honoring his gifts in other men, each according to his genius, and loving the greatest men best; those who envy and calumniate great men hate God; for there is no other God."

Blake and Burns were outside the circle of society and learning: William Cowper, within, repudiated both from the insistent demands of his temperament. Son of a chaplain of George II, educated at Westminster School and the Temple, he had influential friends among aristocrats and lawyers, and was a member of a gay London literary group, the Nonsense Club. But these initial advantages were unavailing against fastidiousness, timidity, and melancholy, which were to make

him miserable in the rough and tumble of school, disappointed in love, and a failure at the bar. From suicidal impulses and periodic insanity he found refuge in pietistic religion, in gardening, carpentry, and rearing pets in a quiet country town, and in poetry. His first important poem, *The Task* (1785), begun at fifty-two, describes his salvation in affecting accents:

I was a stricken deer, that left the herd
 Long since; with many an arrow deep infixt
 My panting side was charg'd, when I withdrew
 To seek a tranquil death in distant shades.
 There I was found by one who had himself
 Been hurt by th' archers. In his side he bore,
 And in his hands and feet, the cruel scars.
 With gentle force soliciting the darts,
 He drew me forth, and heal'd, and bade me live.
 Since then, with few associates, in remote
 And silent woods I wander, far from those
 My former partners of the peopled scene;
 With few associates, and not wishing more.

Such rumors of the great world as penetrate his retreat fill him with horror:

There is no flesh in man's obdurate heart.
 It does not feel for man.

Even the social gatherings in which he learned his exquisite politeness now seem prisons. He condenses his creed in an implied antithesis, "God made the country, and man made the town," which he maintains with literal faith:

Kind nature . . . graces every scene
 Where cruel man defeats not her design.

Men "immured in cities" should return to nature for wiser instruction than that of books.

An unambitious mind
 Content in the low vale of life,

Cowper disclaimed

the tricks of art
When labor and when dullness, club in hand,
Like the two figures at Saint Dunstan's, stand,
Beating alternately, in measured time,
The clock-work tintinabulum of rhyme.

His effortless, colloquial blank verse opens the senses to the countryside. A transparent candor and piety might seem naïve did not humor and the calm deadly retort of the erstwhile man of the world warn the scoffer of his peril. The depths beneath the daily life of this retired bachelor are disclosed momentarily in lyrics of surpassing pathos and terror: "On Receipt of My Mother's Picture" (1790; 1798), "To Mary" (1793; 1803), and "The Castaway" (1799; 1803).

Without critical direction, Burns, Blake, and Cowper had produced poetry of high merit outside the Franco-Latin tradition. The British theory corresponding to Herder's lagged behind their practice. It was not until 1798, a year after Goethe had bidden farewell to his Northern manner on completing the First Part of *Faust*, that two young English poets prefaced their joint volume, *Lyrical Ballads*, with the statement: "The majority of the following poems are to be considered as experiments. They are written chiefly with a view to ascertain how far the language of the middle and lower classes of society is adapted to the purposes of poetic pleasure." Anticipating the objection of "readers of superior judgment" that "the author has sometimes descended too low, and that many of his expressions are too familiar, and not of sufficient dignity," Wordsworth and Coleridge appealed to the precedent of "our older writers"; a precedent which Wordsworth described two years later with historical insight: "This exponent or symbol held forth by metrical language must in different eras of literature have excited very different expectations: for example, in the age of Catullus, Terence, and Lucretius, and that of Statius and Claudian; in our own country, in the age of Shakespeare

and Beaumont and Fletcher, and that of Donne and Cowley, or Dryden, or Pope."

The title chosen for the volume indicates awareness of its chief claims to novelty; that the poems were lyrical and popular (ballads meaning to the authors popular verse in general). The significant poems held the key positions. The volume opens with Coleridge's "Rime of the Ancient Mariner," which weaves the metrical and verbal felicities scattered among British ballads into a revelation of the possibilities of the native alliteration, heavy accentual stress, and internal rhyme. Surpassing Burns and even Blake in the discovery and manipulation of the artistry latent in naïve popular expression, Coleridge had enlarged the resources of English poetry by a form, the literary ballad, quite outside the Popian tradition. In the final poem, "Lines Written above Tintern Abbey," Wordsworth unconsciously gave the national blank verse new melodic qualities, mysterious echoes of his personality deeply stirred by communion with nature and by sympathy with suffering humanity. The new manner had a wide range: "The Ancient Mariner" making real the strange, the exotic, the wild, and "Tintern Abbey" suffusing every-day existence with moments of supernatural radiance. The announced experiments in diction, though in certain poems falling into ludicrous prose through effort to avoid "the gaudiness and inane phraseology of many modern writers," revealed the power of unheightened statement in such lines as

The still, sad music of humanity.

Most of the themes of *Lyrical Ballads* had been treated by Goethe and Blake, whom Wordsworth and Coleridge had probably not read, or by Burns and Cowper, whose work they knew. But Wordsworth pushes certain of them to extremes. Nature to him is not only alive and the abode of spirit, but always beneficent. His interest in humanity extends beyond

the humble and oppressed to the pathological; to "The Idiot Boy" and "The Mad Mother." In his expansion of the Preface for the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1800) the tone of tentative experiment yields to assertions that "humble and rustic life" offers not only the basis for the best poetic diction but also the best subjects for poetry; that "there never is, nor can be, any essential difference between the language of prose and metrical composition"; and that "all good poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings." Revolt against contemporary convention has gone the length of denying merit to poetry produced as self-conscious, rational, aristocratic art.



At the threshold of the nineteenth century, poetry of Northern inspiration had established itself in Germany and gained a footing in England. Northern poets had shown the worth of indigenous forms like the ballad and Shakespearean drama, and of the rhythms and rich vocabularies of their native tongues. They had demonstrated that creation was not necessarily rational nor even self-conscious. By reawakening lyricism, by drawing upon folklore, sagas and mediaeval chronicles, by closing the breach between man and nature, and by disclosing the mystery of daily life and the attractions of the supernatural, they had recovered for poetry old domains and opened new. Yet the Northern manner and materials had not penetrated appreciably into Latin countries. Goethe's defection had cast doubt on their sufficiency. And within themselves they carried unanswered questions. Could poetry become a genuinely popular art, or must it remain the cherished possession of the few? Were the possibilities of lyricism inexhaustible, or limited by the necessity of communication? If Greece offered better example than Rome, which was the true Greece, Winckelmann's or Herder's? Granted that man was akin to nature, was

nature so friendly to him as Cowper and Wordsworth asserted? Would mechanistic science retire before the challenge of poetry, or would it maintain and extend its power over the human spirit?

Chapter Three

JOY IN COMMONALTY SPREAD

For mighty were the auxiliars which then stood
Upon our side, us who were strong in love!

.

When Reason seemed the most to assert her rights
When most intent on making of herself
A prime enchantress.

SO WORDSWORTH recalled the harmonious prospect open in his youth. The rationalism that had driven so much feeling and imagination out of verse seemed ready to make amends as the eighteenth century drew to its close. For science stamped with its authority a psychology which permitted boundless hope for the future of humanity and promised to widen immensely the themes and the audience of poetry.

The time-honored assumptions on which European society rested—the assumptions that men came into the world essentially unequal and burdened with original sin, and that it was impossible to change human nature—had been implicitly denied by Locke's disproof of innate ideas and his substitution of a picture of the mind as a blank tablet at birth. In an age which exalted mind over body, it seemed to follow that men were potentially equal and that inequalities were largely the result of differing environments. Human nature was among the most malleable of stuffs, and there was no obstacle to its indefinite improvement. Men in the mass could be bettered by

legislation, individuals by education. The Frenchman Helvétius, the Italian Beccaria, the Englishman Bentham were agreed that the art of legislation was the art of morals; the two latter asserted that criminals were reclaimable by pressures of pain and rewards of pleasure. Educational theorists, Locke, Rousseau, Goethe's friend Basedow and the Swiss Pestalozzi, reversed the theological doctrine of natural depravity. Human instincts were good. Proper training consisted chiefly in the removal of obstacles to their free expansion, and the adjustment of their collisions by reason. Reason coöperated with nature in preparing Rousseau's *Émile* for citizenship in an ideal commonwealth described in the companion volume, *The Social Contract* (1762).

The goal of improvement defined by Bentham as "the greatest good of the greatest number" satisfied not only his fellow rationalists, but also unsystematic humanitarians pained by slavery, serfdom, and other aspects of the regime of inequality maintained by prisons, tortures, executions, censorship, and spies. The pietist Cowper had many of the same foes as Voltaire. The Christian convinced of the brotherhood of man and the fatherhood of God joined hands with the *philosophe* sure of the absurdity of racial and national distinctions, proud to be a citizen of the world. Contemplation of the unity and the high destiny of humanity stirred Herder, thinker and Christian, to lofty utterance:

'Dies ist einer von uns; dies ist ein Fremder,' so sprechen
Niedere Seelen. Die Welt ist nur ein einziges Haus.
Wer die Sache der Menschengeschlechts als seine betrachtet,
Nimmt an der Götter Geschäft, nimmt an Verhängnisse teil.

'This is one of ourselves; that man is a stranger,'
So say mean souls. The world is only a single house.
Whoso humanity's cause as his own cause considers,
Shares in the business of Gods, takes part in the judgments of Fate.

Joseph Priestley, co-discoverer of oxygen, prophesied:

Knowledge will be subdivided and extended; and knowledge, as Lord Bacon observes, being power, the human powers will, in fact, be enlarged; nature, including both its materials and its laws, will be more at our command; men will make their situation in the world abundantly more easy and comfortable; they will probably prolong their existence in it, and will grow daily more happy each in himself, and more able (and, I believe, more disposed) to communicate happiness to others. Thus, whatever was the beginning of the world, the end will be glorious and paradisiacal, beyond what our imaginations can now conceive. Extravagant as some suppose these views to be, I think I could show them to be fairly suggested by the true theory of human nature, and to arise from the natural course of human affairs.

Social change, legitimized by the intellect and urged by moral zeal, had behind it material forces: the expansive energies of the middle classes throughout Europe and the disintegration of French despotism through administrative inefficiency, impending bankruptcy, and military defeats involving the loss of Canada and India. Ideas of reform were taken up by public-spirited aristocrats and by the "enlightened despots" Frederick of Prussia, Catherine of Russia, and Joseph of Austria, intent on strengthening their power by the elimination of inefficiency and abuses. The ideal commonwealth came perceptibly nearer with the American Declaration of Independence and Constitution, based on many of the ideas of Locke, Montesquieu, and Rousseau. Two years after the Americans had won independence, Friedrich Schiller, braving poverty to free himself from the tyrannical paternalism of the Duke of Württemberg, hailed the approach of a new era in his "Hymn to Joy" (1785), immortalized by Beethoven in the chorus of his Ninth Symphony.

The new era seemed to have come with the French Revolution in 1789. "How much the greatest event it is that ever happened in the world and how much the best!" exclaimed the British Whig leader Fox, voicing the faith of a generation.

The first results of the Revolution justified confidence in the essential goodness of man. After the fall of the Bastille, dread symbol of arbitrary power, the French nobility and clergy surrendered voluntarily their special privileges, and joined with representatives of the middle class in a Declaration of the Rights of Man giving sovereignty to the people as a whole. All classes fraternized in celebrating the anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. Liberty engendered civic spirit among the masses, who sprang to the national defense against neighboring sovereigns intervening to reestablish the old order. An improvised army, chiefly volunteers, astonished the world by beating off at Valmy the best drilled professional soldiers of Europe, the Prussians who had easily defeated the regular troops of Louis XV. The evening after the battle Goethe said to his comrades in the Weimar contingent of the Prussian army: "Here to-day begins a new epoch in world history, and you can say that you were present."

This new epoch, which made the middle-aged Goethe gravely apprehensive for the future of European culture, intoxicated younger poets: Foscolo in Italy, Hölderlin in Germany, Blake, Burns, Wordsworth, and Coleridge in Great Britain. It promised a fresh beginning in life and literature. It justified moral idealism and intellectual superiority to outworn prejudices. The untired energies of the liberated masses would provide themes for verse. In time the populace would become a more genuine and stimulating audience for poetry than the effete aristocracy. The future was a dazzling prospect, ensured by science and by the trend of events.

Democratic faith had need of such deep and wide-spreading roots to withstand the storm which soon clouded the French morning. Even before Valmy, city mobs under the pressure of war hysteria revealed their ferocity by massacring political prisoners. Revolutionary leaders could not resist the temptations of a struggle for power, which by successive purges of

moderates delivered the nation into the hands of extremists ruling by terror. An inevitable reaction shook off the fanatical Robespierre at the cost of most of the equalitarian ideals. What remained of civic devotion and of the energies released by opening careers to competition was diverted into imperialistic wars by the profiteers of the Directorate and further exploited by an upstart Corsican dictator who became "the nightmare of Europe." Goethe's fears were largely realized. The overturn that had promised the brotherhood of man ironically awoke an unwonted spirit of nationalism, first in France and then in the countries she invaded or menaced. The democratic expedient of a nation in arms for defense set the precedent for conscription that poured out the best blood of the Continent. Armies of extraordinary size spread havoc from Madrid to Moscow; French soldiers were quartered in Goethe's house at Weimar.

What literary talent survived in France was gagged or driven into exile by Napoleon's censorship, more efficiently intolerant of intellectual freedom than the monarchy it succeeded. In other countries, French excesses and imperialism provoked reaction against liberal ideas. Only in England, protected from the necessity of conscription by a narrow strip of sea on which her naval power was unchallenged, remained the security and material comfort encouraging to literary production; and even there the traditional liberties of speech and of the press did not long survive dread of propaganda for democratic ideas. The severest repression, including sedition trials for advocates of representative government, followed immediately upon England's declaration of war with France in 1793. In that year, Robert Burns, on hearing of the sentence of two moderate Edinburgh reformers to transportation to Australia, dashed off in a gallop over the heaths to compose the defiant "Scots Wha Hae," whose every line is a sword blow. In 1795 he boldly professed undiminished faith:

It's coming yet, for a' that,
 That man to man the world o'er
 Shall brothers be for a' that.

The fullest and most intimate record of the vicissitudes of this faith from the outbreak of the Revolution to the Napoleonic era is by an Englishman, William Wordsworth. Books VI to XI of *The Prelude* (written in 1805-1806, but not published until 1850) bear the connected narrative, to which shorter occasional poems add vivid illustration. *The Prelude* has the genetic quality of the new poetry, unfolding the interrelation of a developing mind and a changing society. When

Europe . . . was thrilled with joy,
 France standing on the top of golden hours,
 And human nature seeming born again,

the twenty-one-year-old poet arrived at Calais by accident on the eve of the first anniversary of the fall of the Bastille. The joy of a whole people, the spread of "benevolence and blessedness" into the remotest villages, and evening "dances of liberty" gave enchantment to his vacation tramp with a fellow undergraduate across France to Switzerland. The desire to watch the growth of a new society, disguised under the pretext of learning the language, drew him back to France the next year for a stay of many months.

Wordsworth was predisposed to sympathy with French innovations by circumstances that had kept him apart from the English class system. His native county, Cumberland, best preserved the fast vanishing small landowners, shepherds and farmers, who had been Cromwell's best soldiers. In them Wordsworth had seen the capacity for self-government that was being claimed for the French peasant. He had attended an unpretentious school in a village instead of one of the conventional "public schools" at which youths of his class, the upper-middle, mingled with aristocrats. Lord Lonsdale's abuse of special privilege in avoiding payment of money due the

poet's father inclined him to give credence to French descriptions of

Royal courts, and that voluptuous life
Unfeeling, where the man who is of soul
The meanest thrives the most.

He readily drank in theories of the natural goodness and natural rights of man, and held fast to them even when prisoners were massacred in his close vicinity at Orleans. For massacres could be explained as the unloosing of hatreds accumulated under despotism, which would no longer have cause. His hopes reached their height with the dethronement of Louis XVI, the proclamation of a republic and the victory at Valmy.

But Paris, the center of events, which lay on his way homeward, was disquieting. Through streets that lately had run with blood in the attack on the royal palace Wordsworth passed to the prison in which the royal family was confined. Returning to his hotel room above the roofs of the city, he was haunted at night by a fear that reason had hitherto banished, the fear that massacres might recur. Observation of the growing influence of Robespierre made him the more afraid. He even thought of throwing himself into the effort to keep the Revolution true to its humanitarian aims. Only lack of money forced his return to England a few weeks before she declared war on France.

In London, his real torture began. "A patriot of the world," attached to the enemy country not only by social sympathy but also by a mistress who had borne him a daughter, he clung with equal passion to his native land. He tried to drive nationalism completely from his heart by accepting the extreme rationalistic position of William Godwin's *Political Justice*, that a genuine philanthropist must disregard feelings interfering with abstract right. He even schooled himself to rejoice in his country's defeats in what he thought an unjust cause, though he could not forget that they brought suffering and death to

thousands of humble Englishmen who had no choice but to obey. Against the misery war brings to the families of the poor, his early poems protested. He was haunted by dreams in which he pleaded before "unjust tribunals" in France for those doomed to the guillotine. The death of Robespierre lifted a great weight from his spirit. But under Robespierre's successors the actual imperialistic France could not be identified with the cause of justice. Liberty was homeless in Europe.

As his social ideals faded from practice, Wordsworth was the more determined to bring them into the only realm in which he had power. Poetry could plead the defeated cause, if not by direct statement of proscribed opinions, then subtly through the democratization of its language and subject matter. In the first edition of *Lyrical Ballads* (1798) all characters are from humble life, treated without condescension; they speak simple, idiomatic English, grammatical, and without dialect. Not however until the second edition in 1800 did the experiment produce a distinguished poem. "Michael" by its subtitle, A Pastoral Poem, challenged comparison with the traditional pastoral so long a plaything of aristocratic art and recently ridiculed by Burns and Crabbe for its artificiality. From the life of a real Cumberland shepherd Wordsworth distills universal tragedy. In its context the line,

And never lifted up a single stone,

has the concentrated force of a verse by Racine. No longer could there be question whether Wordsworth had achieved his purpose "to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply."

The poet had brought his manner of living into harmony with his opinions and artistic practice by settling with his sister in a village cottage beside a Cumberland lake. They had broken the conventions of their social class in having no servant and in feeding themselves to a large extent by gardening and fishing. On their walks they met and talked with a

distressingly large number of men seeking for work. From Dove Cottage, Wordsworth sent a copy of the second edition of *Lyrical Ballads* to the former Whig leader Charles James Fox, retired from politics because of his opposition to the war with France. The letter of January 14, 1801, accompanying the gift, expresses deep concern with the effect of wartime economic changes on the lot of the masses:

Recently, by the spread of manufactures through every part of the country, by the heavy taxes on postage, by workhouses, houses of industry, and the invention of soup-shops, etc., superadded to the increasing disproportion between the price of labor and that of the necessaries of life, the bonds of domestic feeling among the poor, as far as the influences of these things has extended, have been weakened, and in innumerable instances entirely destroyed. In the two poems, *The Brothers*, and *Michael*, I have attempted to draw a picture of the domestic affections, as I know they exist among a class of men who are now almost confined to the north of England. They are small independent owners of land, . . . men of respectable education, who daily labor on their own properties. . . . The power which these affections will acquire among such men is inconceivable by those who have only had an opportunity of observing hired laborers, farmers, and the manufacturing poor. Their little tract of land serves as a kind of permanent rallying-point of their domestic affections. . . . This class of men is rapidly disappearing. You, Sir, . . . have felt that the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor. The two poems, which I have mentioned, were written with a view to show that men who do not wear fine clothes can feel deeply. . . . I thought, at a time when these feelings are sapped in so many ways, that the two poems might co-operate, however feebly, with the illustrious efforts which you have made to stem this and other evils with which the country is laboring.

From the mountains above Dove Cottage, Wordsworth had seen a portent more menacing to *Michael's* way of life than the scientific agriculture whose destruction of village communities Goldsmith had observed thirty years before. Toward the southern horizon was ever denser smoke from the factories of the Manchester region, where for fifteen years the newly

invented steam engine had been driving increasingly cunning machinery for the production of textiles. Since the outbreak of the war, factories had been running night shifts to supply not only England but also her continental allies, whose industries were not secure from invasion. So gradually as to escape the attention of poets hitherto, had been accomplished a revolution of greater significance than that in France on which all eyes were riveted. The Industrial Revolution was taking place when the British laboring population, suspected of democratic opinions, had against its unionization the full weight of the government and of the propertied classes, who were seized with what Wordsworth was to call "a panic fear of change." In 1799 Parliament, as a measure to check the rapid rise in prices, had made combination for the raising of wages illegal. The cost of living and competition from large estates obliged small landowners, such as Michael, to send their sons to work in the cities, often to the worse fate of exploitation as factory hands. What assistance the upper classes offered, was pauperizing. In "The Last of the Flock" (1798) Wordsworth had told the story of a shepherd subjected to the slow torture of selling his sheep one by one until by their disappearance he could qualify for relief. The poet objected to workhouses as leaving untouched the causes of distress. His appeal to Fox was for a statesmanlike preservation of the nation's human resources: "the most sacred of all property is the property of the poor." Very probably he had observed the strength France had gained from one of the permanent results of the Revolution: the break-up of great aristocratic estates, which gave ownership of land to many hands that tilled it.

Wordsworth's concern for the French people survived that of his friends Coleridge and Southey, who had not been in France. The unprovoked invasion of the Swiss Republic had drawn from Coleridge "The Recantation: an Ode" (later entitled "France"), published in a London newspaper in 1798,

which ascribed the perversion of revolutionary aims to the wickedness of the French:

The Sensual and Dark rebel in vain,
Slaves of their own compulsion.

Four years later Wordsworth in a sympathetic sonnet regretted the sort of leadership they must expect from Napoleon:

'Tis not in battles that from youth we train
The Governor who must be wise and good.

The Peace of Amiens in March, 1802, a few weeks before the composition of these lines, gave him the opportunity to observe France under the new rule, while arranging for the future of his ten-year-old daughter, whom he had never seen. The day following Wordsworth's landing in Calais, Napoleon was made First Consul for life. The news sent the poet's thoughts back to his first impressions of France twelve years before. He addressed to his companion in that memorable walking trip a contrast of the present with the past which is the most moving and concentrated memorial of the waning of the great collective movement:

Jones! as from Calais southward you and I
Went pacing side by side, this public Way
Streamed with the pomp of a too-credulous day,
When faith was pledged to new-born Liberty:
A homeless sound of joy was in the sky:
From hour to hour the antiquated Earth
Beat like the heart of Man: songs, garlands, mirth,
Banners and happy faces, far and nigh!
And now, sole register that such things were,
Two solitary greetings have I heard,
'Good morrow, Citizen!' a hollow word,
As if a dead man spake it! Yet despair
I feel not: happy am I as a bird:
Fair seasons yet will come, and hopes as fair.*

* The two final lines follow the original version, before its alteration in 1827.

The hopes expelled from France rested with Napoleon's enemies, even with the defeated leader of Negro slaves in Haiti, Toussaint L'Ouverture, whom Wordsworth encouraged in the grand style:

Thou hast left behind
Powers that will work for thee; air, earth, and skies;
There's not a breathing of the common wind
That will forget thee; thou hast great allies;
Thy friends are exultations, agonies,
And love, and man's unconquerable mind.

An evening star setting over the dimly descried coast of England drew forth an avowal of patriotism. In comparison with what France had become, England was a land of liberty. Returned to Dover after four weeks, Wordsworth looked back with apprehension at the narrowness of the Channel, "like a lake, or river," which formed the barrier to invasion.

But London's plutocratic opulence, a shock after war-drained France, troubled with misgivings his love of country:

The wealthiest man among us is the best:
No grandeur now in nature and in book
Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
This is idolatry; and these we adore:
Plain living and high thinking are no more.

In the need to battle with the ruthless individualism of *laissez faire*, he invoked the self-sacrificing devotion of the great public servant whose political sonnets were his model. The familiar "Milton! thou shouldst be living at this hour" is one of the moments in which moral fervor endows with majesty the simple directness of the Wordsworthian style. Yet when the war with France broke out anew the following year, the poet had no longer a divided heart. The sonnets which encourage the heroic resistance of the Spanish people to Napoleon speak with astonishing freshness today. Although Wordsworth

became reconciled to British political institutions as the imperfect best of which man in his time was capable, throughout the Napoleonic struggle he never ceased to urge upon his countrymen the insidious dangers of the piled-up profits from the war. In 1807 he rebuked their stultifying materialism in the stirring lines:

The world is too much with us; late and soon,
Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers:
Little we see in Nature that is ours;
We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon!

Books VIII and IX of *The Excursion* (1814), unfortunately composed when his creative powers were failing, are the earliest indictment in European poetry of the abuses of the factory system, including child labor, and of the fundamental viciousness of the current social philosophy whereby

man is made
An offering, or a sacrifice, a tool
Or implement, a passive thing employed
As a brute mean, without acknowledgment
Of common right or interest in the end.

When political democracy seemed a lost cause in Europe, Wordsworth was urging a measure of industrial democracy and a policy whereby the state would conserve its human resources in vitality and intelligence. The way to collective happiness had proved infinitely more difficult than it had seemed in the golden dawn of the Revolution. But his efforts to democratize poetry, greeted with ridicule by critics and miscomprehension by the majority of readers, had not been in vain. They were being largely accepted by a younger generation of English poets coming to maturity when the fall of Napoleon in 1815 permitted the return of public attention to domestic affairs, including the long overdue problems of the Industrial Revolution.



The Napoleonic episode between the old agricultural and the new industrial Europe was so stupendous as to require the perspective of a century before it received adequate treatment in verse with Thomas Hardy's *Dynasts* (1903-1908). But the enigmatic personality of Napoleon immediately stirred the imagination of poets. His Italian victories dazzled his temperamental opposite, the impractical idealist Friedrich Hölderlin:

Heilige Gefässe sind die Dichter,
 Worin der Wein des Lebens, der Geist
 Der Helden sich aufbewahrt.
 Aber der Geist dieses Jünglings,
 Der schnelle, müsst er es ihn nicht zersprengen,
 Wo es ihn fassen wollte, das Gefäss?
 Der Dichter lass ihn unberührt, wie den Geist der Natur!
 Am solchen Stoffe wird zum Knaben der Meister.
 Er kann im Gedichte nicht leben und bleiben,
 Er lebt und bleibt in der Welt!

Poets are holy vessels, that preserve
 The wine of life, the spirit of heroes.
 But the spirit of this youth, so swift,
 Must it not burst the vessel that would hold it?
 Let the poet leave him untouched, like the Spirit of Nature!
 For with such a theme the master becomes a child.
 Bonaparte cannot live and endure in verse,
 He lives and endures in the world!

After Waterloo, retrospect on the waste of Napoleon's powers upon vulgar and even petty ends gave Byron an opportunity for antithetical fireworks in the Third Canto (1816) of *Childe Harold*. The news of his death in Saint Helena on May 5, 1821, brought forth two notable poems, full of awe at the power one man had embodied. Shelley exclaimed:

What! alive and so bold, O Earth?
 Art thou not over-bold?
 What! leapest thou forth as of old

In the light of thy morning mirth,
The last of the flock of the starry fold?
Ha! leapest thou forth as of old?
Are not the limbs still when the ghost is fled,
And canst thou move, Napoleon being dead?

Alessandro Manzoni began gravely:

Ei fu. Siccome immobile,
Dato il mortal sospiro,
Stette la spoglia immemore
Orba di tanto spiro,
Così percossa, attonita,
La terra al nunzio sta,

Muta pensando all'ultima
Ora dell'uom fatale;
Né sa quando una simile
Orma di piè mortale
La sua cruenta polvere
A calpestar verrà.

He is no more. As his body
Lay still and unmindful
After its last breath,
Robbed of so great a spirit,
So, shocked and astonished,
Stands the world at the news,

In silent thought of the final
Hour of the Man of Destiny;
Nor knows it when another
Such print of mortal footstep
Shall come again to trample
Upon its bloody dust.

Shelley cannot forgive the ruin the despot brought to millions whose hopes he deluded. But grave astonishment remains with the Italian, convinced that it is beyond the power of his generation to pass judgment. "Il cinque maggio" (May the Fifth), in the Dantesque tradition of concise dignity and sustained nobility, is the greatest poem Napoleon inspired. In the next

decade Victor Hugo's ode "A la colonne" marks the beginnings of the nostalgic Napoleonic legend.



I hated thee, fallen tyrant! . . .

. . . .

I know

Too late, since thou and France are in the dust,
That Virtue owns a more eternal foe
Than Force or Fraud: old Custom, Legal Crime,
And bloody Faith, the foulest birth of time.

Shelley's reflections in 1816 convey the disgust of many grown to manhood since the Revolution with the Europe which the removal of the shadow of the Corsican revealed. The allied sovereigns of Austria, Prussia, Russia, and France, with the general coöperation of the dominant British Tories, had set the clock back as nearly as possible to 1789. Traditionalism in Church and State was on guard with a policy of systematic repression. The exhausted peoples of the Continent dropped reluctantly into the old grooves. Two careers only were open to ambitious youth, the army and the church.

The English people suffered most when the war was over. Their industries, expanded to meet the war needs of Britain and her Allies, lost a great part of their markets. Unemployment on an unprecedentedly large scale came while food prices were kept high by a protective tariff. The gloomy predictions Malthus had made in 1798 concerning the relation of population to food supply and had supported in 1815 by the law of diminishing returns from agriculture were popular among the propertied classes as a justification of their attitude of non-responsibility for the maintenance of paupers. Complaints of the working class met savage repression by a government still fearful of French ideas. In 1819 mounted yeomanry dispersed with considerable bloodshed some sixty thousand factory

workers gathered in St. Peter's Fields near Manchester to elect delegates to present their grievances to Parliament. In this year of "Peterloo," as the massacre was called by those who felt that it wiped out the gratitude due their rulers for Waterloo, an echo of the stringency of the times entered even an "Ode to a Nightingale." John Keats sighed enviously to the bird:

No hungry generations tread thee down.

Democratic and humanitarian ideas were avowed chiefly by aristocratic poets in revolt against their class. As members of a privileged order they could speak boldly. Byron had the greater immediate influence, winning the admiration of the aged Goethe for continuing steadfast in the course he had himself abandoned by going to Weimar. But for posterity, Shelley was the more genuine humanitarian and the greater artist. That his hypersensitive temperament,

a nerve o'er which do creep
The else unfelt oppressions of this earth,

should have fallen upon an era calloused by war and by fear of revolution, was Shelley's tragedy. But the laceration of the man was for the greater glory of poetry. Without the caution and philosophic Fabianism of Wordsworth, he was the Quixote of lost causes. But his verse learned a subtle indirection of which he was incapable in action. The straightforward propaganda of *Queen Mab* (1813), resurrecting the rationalism of Godwin, lost its harsh outlines in the splendors and dancing rhythms of *Prometheus Unbound* (1820), insinuated itself into the rollicking parody *Peter Bell the Third* (1819; 1839), and employed a symbolism that said everything while seeming far from contemporary reference. This symbolism is at the core of "Ozymandias" (1818) and of the "Ode to the West Wind" (1820):

Drive my dead thoughts over the universe
Like withered leaves to quicken a new birth!

. . . .

O Wind,
If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?

Shelley clothed in glories of sight and sound the ideal of universal love, confident that men would at length find it irresistible. His body, exhausted by efforts to achieve reform and by the excitement of poetic composition, forced cries of despair, such as the "Stanzas Written in Dejection, near Naples." But the concluding lines of *Prometheus Unbound* are a memorial of his dauntless spirit:

To suffer woes which Hope thinks infinite;
To forgive wrongs darker than death or night;
To defy Power, which seems omnipotent;
To love, to bear; to hope till Hope creates
From its own wreck the thing it contemplates;
Neither to change, nor falter, nor repent;
This, like thy glory, Titan, is to be
Good, great and joyous, beautiful and free;
This is alone Life, Joy, Empire, and Victory!

In the decade after Shelley's death it became safe to publish the indignant responses from his Italian exile to the news of Peterloo. "The Mask of Anarchy" (1819; 1832) and "Song to the Men of England" (1819; 1839) are the first adequate poetic championship of the modern industrial proletariat. The direct, stinging lines of the "Song," any worker could understand:

The seed ye sow, another reaps;
The wealth ye find, another keeps;
The robes ye weave, another wears;
The arms ye forge, another bears.

Sow seed,—but let no tyrant reap;
Find wealth,—let no impostor heap;
Weave robes,—let not the idle wear;
Forge arms,—in your defense to bear.

The abstractions and bitter irony of the opening of the "Mask" are for a more literate audience, but its close, addressed to the nation, returns to the simplicity of the "Song." In his awareness that the struggle with an aristocracy at bay was only preliminary to a severer struggle against capitalistic exploitation, and in his avowal that "in order to move men to true sympathy we must use the familiar language of men, . . . the real language of men in general and not that of any particular class to whose society the writer happens to belong," Shelley is the successor of Wordsworth.

Byron, although no friend of the masses like Wordsworth and Shelley, gave their cause more immediately effective service by striking at the mighty without scruple as to weapons. Pique at his cold reception in the House of Lords chiefly motivated his anticipation of Shelley's espousal of the cause of the industrial proletariat in the journalistic "Ode to the Framers of the Frame Bill." The sting of ostracism following the scandal of his wife's separation nerved later and more powerful blows. Behind them was the prestige of fame and a dramatized personality. Finding ready at hand the arsenal of eighteenth-century satire and the lyrical enthusiasm of revolutionary idealists, he compounded them with humor and irony into the high explosive of *The Vision of Judgment* (1822) and *Don Juan* (1819-1824). The breadth of his effects, the lack of subtlety in his style made him easily translatable into the languages of the Continent, where there was a ready ear for assaults on British arrogance, brutality and hypocrisy. Death in the camp of Greek insurgents at Missolonghi crowned Byron's name with the aureole of martyrdom for liberty.

Beneath the surface in Italy and Germany, returned to their old masters, was germinating seed sown by the French invaders. The Rhineland and most of Italy had known the benefits of the uniform administration of the Code Napoléon, which preserved the revolutionary principles of equality of classes and races before the law, abolition of feudal dues, and

substitution of equal inheritance for primogeniture. On the other hand, resistance to invasion and to the exactions of French garrisons had aroused desire for national unity and increased pride in indigenous culture.

Ugo Foscolo, who had enrolled in the army of Napoleon at the moment of a freed Venice and a Cispadine Republic, was bitterly disappointed when Venetia was given back to Austria by the Treaty of Campo Formio. But through detestation of the Austrians he remained in French service for nearly ten years, fuming inwardly at the steady Gallicizing of Italy, even to its language. The extension to Italy of Napoleon's Saint-Cloud Decree, which made burials under stones of uniform size beyond city limits compulsory, stirred him to defend one of the few sources of pride left to Italians, the inspiring nearness to their daily lives of the illustrious dead entombed within churches or churchyards. His verse epistle *Dei sepolcri* (1807) turns from the lament that Parini's remains are lost in an unmarked pauper's grave to consoling thought of the immortals buried in Santa Croce at Florence—Michelangelo, Machiavelli, and Galileo—and of the dead of antiquity lying in Italy and on Mediterranean shores. It concludes with homage to the tumulus of Marathon and the tomb of Hector, eternal symbols of heroic defense of fatherlands. Italian poetry was reborn in these stately, melodious lines vibrant with echoes of a rich past contrasting with the barren humiliation of the present.

In the midst of the post-Napoleonic reaction, the frail young Giacomo Leopardi, son of a provincial noble in the Papal States, stirred an undercurrent by the daring nationalism of his rhetorical odes "All' Italia" and "Sopra il monumento di Dante" (both of 1818). The more mature "Ad Angelo Mai" (1820) deplores the waste of Italian conscripts in Napoleon's Russian campaign. His idylls "Il sabato del villaggio" (Saturday in the Village, 1831) and "La quiete dopo la tempesta" (The Quiet after the Storm, 1831) resemble Wordsworth in faithful, sympathetic observation of the lives of artisans and

peasants, though the diction is far removed from their speech. Leopardi was the inspiration of the chief poet of Italian nationalism, Giosuè Carducci, who lived to see his country unified and independent.

Unification of Germany was not a step toward individual liberty, for it was engineered by the exceedingly class-conscious aristocrat Bismarck. The French occupation of the Rhineland, however, shaped the politics of the greatest German poet of the nineteenth century, Heinrich Heine. Born at Düsseldorf in 1797, he breathed the air of freedom under the Napoleonic regime that abolished the ancient civil disabilities of the Jewish race. Never reconciled to the return of German reaction, he was at length obliged to flee to France, in 1830 once more a safe refuge for liberals. From Paris he launched the shaft: "When I was on top of the Saint Gotthard Pass, I heard Germany snore. She was sleeping peacefully under the mild protection of her thirty-six monarchs." The irony and parody of his *Atta Troll* (1843) and *Deutschland* (1844) did for Teutonic conservatism what Byron had done for English, by ridicule of grandiose philosophic idealism which left practical abuses untouched and by exposure of the subtle danger from a belief that national unity necessitates uniformity of opinion.

In the eighteen-twenties came to maturity a generation of French poets, born during the Revolution or under Napoleon, who had largely escaped the impress of the *ancien régime*. In the troubled period of their youth the traditional education, rigidly intellectualistic and stressing the composition of Latin verse and orations, had temporarily broken down, and the salons were in abeyance. Complacent assurance of the superiority of the national literature had been shaken by the spread over Europe of French soldiers and officials, who sometimes brought back a taste for other cultures. The ablest of the younger poets, Victor Hugo, Alfred de Vigny, and Alphonse

de Lamartine, admired Shakespeare, Byron, and Dante. Hugo, son of a Napoleonic officer, had lived in Spain and in Italian islands. Lamartine had traveled in Italy. Vigny had been in garrison on the German and Spanish borders and had married an Englishwoman. Their discovery of the delights of solitary meditation brought lyricism back to French verse after almost a century and a half of absence. The enormous popularity of Lamartine's *Méditations poétiques* (1820), sincere expression of grief for a personal loss with melody long unheard in the language, revealed a changing taste that ran counter to the efforts of the restored Bourbons to strengthen, through the Academy and the clergy, aristocratic literary tradition as a support for the throne. Lamartine and Vigny were of noble families and Hugo was a legitimist, but the logic of their departure from the established literary order gradually altered their political views.

Tragedy, the stronghold of convention, was invaded by the innovations of Hugo and Vigny. The Preface to Hugo's unacted *Cromwell* (1827) parallels the earlier critical manifestoes of Herder and Wordsworth. Shakespeare is held to justify violation of the unities, mingling of comic and tragic. Molière is a native precedent for the abandonment of the noble style for "verse . . . daring to say everything without prudery, to express everything without studied elegance, . . . able to run through the whole poetic scale from high to low, from the most elevated to the most commonplace ideas, . . . popular expressions." In the matter of diction, where prejudice was strongest, Hugo was more cautious in practice than in theory, for his plays must pass a censorship in order to be acted. After Vigny had won a representation by the Theatre Français of a faithful translation of *Othello*, with its vulgar properties of handkerchief and pillow, the censors thought they might put a stop to the unorthodox trend by letting Parisians laugh off the stage Hugo's *Hernani*, whose manuscript abounded in

"improprieties of every sort. The king often speaks like a bandit, the bandit treats the king like a brigand." Still, the author was obliged to delete expressions offensive to royal dignity, and had difficulties with the chief actress, who objected to saying to the bandit, "You are my lion," when convention decreed the substitution of "You are my lord" for the too primitive metaphor.

The first night of *Hernani*, February 25, 1830, drew partisans of the old and the new manners ready to do battle with laughter, hisses, or applause of a violence hardly conceivable in nations less ready to see political and social import in matters of taste. Laughter greeted such violation of tragic decorum by common words as the question: "What time is it?" and reply: "Midnight, soon." The verse,

Parlons francs. Vous aimez Madame et ses yeux noirs,

Let us talk frankly. You love Madam and her black eyes,

had to be altered in the published version to

Vous aimez cette dame et ses doux entretiens

You love this lady and her gentle conversation.

But from the first it was clear innovation had won. Two weeks later, in a Preface to the published version, the author stated boldly the implications:

Literary liberty is the child of political liberty. This principle is that of the century and will prevail. Ultras of every sort, classical and monarchical, will in vain lend each other aid in reconstituting entirely the old order, society and literature. . . . For a new people, a new art. While admiring the literature of Louis XIV, so well adapted to his monarchy, it will know how to have its own national literature, this present-day France, this France of the nineteenth century, whose liberty was fashioned by Mirabeau, whose power, by Napoleon. . . . To a court literature, let a popular literature succeed. . . . This liberty the public desires as it ought to be, compatible with order in the state, with art in literature.



The change foreshadowed came five months later. Charles X, a brother of Louis XVI, having overreached himself to bring back the society of his youth by granting the aristocracy a practical monopoly of political power, was dethroned by street fighting in which the Parisian middle class and populace joined forces. Monarchy by divine right was succeeded by limited monarchy recognizing the nation as the source of its authority and giving preponderance to the wealthier portion of the *bourgeoisie*. The new king, Louis-Philippe, son of the Duke of Orleans who had voted for the execution of his cousin Louis XVI, was long shunned by the other European sovereigns as "the king of the barricades." Paris became a refuge for exiles; for advocates of the self-determination of racial minorities, Poles, Irish, Italians, and Hungarians, and Germans opposed to absolutism. In this more favorable atmosphere, Hugo gradually widened the vocabulary of lyrical poetry, much more slowly than Wordsworth because he had more deeply seated habits to overcome in his readers and in himself. It was not until 1837 that he produced in "La Vache" (The Cow) something comparable in naturalness and simplicity to the rustic idylls of Leopardi and Wordsworth. In his volumes published after 1850 he went further by the skillful use of technical terms, proper and geographical names, colloquialisms and metaphors awakened in words dulled by usage. His fastidious junior Baudelaire wrote in admiration: "I notice in the Bible a prophet whom God commanded to eat a book. I do not know in what world Victor Hugo ate preliminarily the dictionary of the language he was called to speak; but I do know that the French lexicon, issuing from his mouth, has become a world, a colored, melodious, and ever-changing universe."

The moderation of the Revolution of 1830, dispelling fears that social change must inevitably bring a Reign of Terror, facilitated a bloodless British revolution. The Reform Act of

1832 gave the vote to a larger proportion of the middle class than in France. For sixteen years thereafter the two nations developed similarly as limited monarchies in which manufacturing and commercial capitalism rapidly gained influence. England, with far greater experience of representative government and a more advanced industry, set the pace. Steam-driven machinery was not common in French textile, silk, and metallurgic industries until just before 1830, though thereafter railroads spread almost simultaneously in the two nations. In 1851, when the English agricultural population was only half that engaged in manufacture and commerce, two-thirds of the French still gained their living from the land. Some ten million were small proprietors, mostly of land lost by the aristocracy in the first Revolution; whereas the great British landlords had steadily increased their holdings by the enclosures against which such protests as Goldsmith's had been in vain. Nevertheless, the French government was the more plutocratic, for the intellectual class of professional men was almost completely excluded from the franchise by a high property qualification, and the enfeebled aristocracy was not an effective counterpoise to business interests. Labor unions were outlawed, whereas the British Parliament had legalized them in 1824. In disputes about individual agreements, the unsupported word of a French employer sufficed in court. The working class, a source of anxiety to the government because of its experience in street fighting, was kept under surveillance by the requirement of employment booklets.

This golden age for the company promoter and the speculator gave enormous profits from a long working day carried over from the era of less productive hand labor. The novels of Balzac, Dickens, and Thackeray and the caricatures of Daumier are impressive contemporary records of the role of money. In both nations the rights of private property were absolute; but in practice the British, through longer industrial experience and through an effective union in Parliament of

landed proprietors and philanthropic intellectuals, were quicker to bring under the regulation of the central government the evils of child labor and slums that had been aggravated by the Industrial Revolution. The increasingly stringent child-labor laws of 1833 to 1853 were paralleled in France only by the mild and largely unenforced restrictions of 1841. Neither government had grasped the fundamentals of the problem of widespread involuntary unemployment arising from business cycles. Statisticians, jubilant at the increase of aggregate wealth, too readily assumed that it meant national welfare.

In the two most powerful countries of Europe, monarchy and landed aristocracy had been shorn of most of their power. But through the advent of the Industrial Revolution the goals of liberty, fraternity, and equality were scarcely nearer. The industrialist, the merchant, and the banker were more greedy than the aristocrat, less restrained by social responsibility or humanitarian ideas. British Parliamentary reports of working conditions in textile mills (1833) and in mines and miscellaneous industries (1842), and of public health in the mushroom manufacturing cities, by their revelation of misery and degradation largely the result of the exploitation of man by man, were a tremendous blow to complacency in the new economic order. No comparable official accounts of French industrialism were available, but French readers were disturbed by the description of British conditions in *New Principles of Political Economy* (1819) by Sismondi, who had visited Manchester two years before Peterloo, and by Buret's more recent *Misery of the Working Classes in England and France* (1841).

It was in France, first of all, that a conscience roused by long experience of social upheavals gave a wide audience to systematic and constructive criticism of the theory of unlimited competition under which machine industry and commerce were expanding. From Sismondi's report of the exploitation and waste in British industry, the Saint-Simonian state socialists drew a great part of their arguments. Rousseau's theory of the

essential goodness of human nature inspired Fourier's plan of coöperative communities in which men would enjoy working because freed from compulsion to one monotonous task, from the division of labor which was the division of man into segments. Louis Blanc, who had shared the sufferings of the Parisian workingmen, in his *Organization of Labor* (1840) proposed national workshops for the unemployed during economic depressions. The priest Lamennais, preaching the responsibility of the Church for the material welfare of the masses in the fervid Biblical eloquence of his *Words of a Believer* (1834), anticipated the Christian Socialism of the Anglican clergymen Maurice and Kingsley in 1848. These forms of socialism, the communism of Cabet and the anarchism of Proudhon revived in French intellectuals the humanitarian zeal of the eighteenth century. Advocates of a republican form of government formed secret societies. Heine found the workingmen of Paris harking back to the better days of the Revolution by reading cheap reprints of the invectives of Marat and Robespierre against the rich. Already by 1835, the ferment of ideas and the unrest of the populace were so great that the government forbade the press to publish attacks on private property.

In England, collectivism made much less headway,* for there the segregation of the classes had been maintained without the break of a revolution. Disraeli wrote in 1845 that Victoria ruled over "two nations, between whom there is no intercourse and no sympathy, who are as ignorant of each other's habits, thoughts, and feelings, as if they were dwellers in different zones, or inhabitants of different planets; who are formed by a different breeding, ordered by different manners, and are not governed by the same laws. . . . The Rich and the Poor." Unlike the French, the English intellectuals, having the vote, had no common grievance with the masses, and their humanitarian impulses could find practical outlet in boards of

* Robert Owen, for example, did not have an influence comparable to that of the French socialists.

health and in factory inspection. It was only after 1840 that criticism of capitalism reached a wide audience through the fiery, picturesque outpourings of Carlyle. The major poets, Tennyson and Browning, were unacquainted with industrialism and content with the Reform Act and the peculiarly national form of freedom described by Tennyson as slowly broadening down "from precedent to precedent." The social indignation of Wordsworth, Shelley, and Byron burned only in scattered verses of minor writers; in Thomas Hood's "Song of the Shirt" (1843) and the poorly visualized "Cry of the Children" (1844) by the cloistered Elizabeth Barrett.

But in France, the major poets shared the confidence in the common man that pervaded the contemporary prose; the novels of George Sand and Eugene Sue, the histories of Michelet, the philosophy of Quinet. Lamartine, Vigny, and Hugo continued their movement toward the left. Immediately upon the overthrow of Charles X, Lamartine, imbued by Lamennais with faith in the inevitable progress of humanity under the guidance of Divine Providence, in "Les Révolutions" (1830) gave warning to the ruling classes of the stupidity of resisting change. Carrying on the aristocratic tradition of paternalism, as a member of the Chamber of Deputies he repeatedly urged upon the government its responsibility for relieving misery. In 1835 he persuaded the Academy of Dijon to set for its competition, which had called forth Rousseau's epoch-making *Discourses*, the topic of The Improvement of the Working Classes. His narrative poem *Jocelyn* (1836), introduced by a prediction that the epic of the future would celebrate collective humanity, rises to lyric heights in the section "Les Laboureurs" describing the dignity and beauty of tilling the soil. Convinced at length in 1843 that the government would do nothing, he joined the republican Opposition. His immensely popular *History of the Girondists*, reviewing the early stages of the great Revolution, was a pamphlet in verse to show that a republic would not lead to a Robespierre, that universal suffrage was compatible with

moderation. Victor Hugo, attracted by the slogan, "solidarity and humanity," of the Saint-Simonian Pierre Leroux, showed in his verse increasing social compunction. "Rencontre" (1840) describes the moral degradation of orphan children left to beg; "Oceano Nox" of the same year is an eloquently musical expression of the communal sorrows of sea-going folk. The social preoccupation reached even the most solitary literary figure of the time, Alfred de Vigny, who in "La Maison du berger" (1844) declared: "J'aime la majesté des souffrances humaines" (I revere the majesty of human sufferings). A younger generation of poets was taking the further step to socialism. In 1845 Leconte de Lisle joined the editorial staff of the Fourierist newspaper, *La Démocratie pacifique*.



Bad harvests in 1847 followed by an industrial depression and a financial crisis combined against the unyielding policy of Louis Philippe's Prime Minister Guizot the middle-class republicans, desirous of widening the suffrage, and the socialist workingmen, eager for economic reforms. Street fighting was again decisive. In February, 1848, Louis-Philippe and Guizot fled to England, while a Provisional Government was formed from the leaders of the revolt, republican and socialist, including Louis Blanc and Lamartine. This third Revolution in France was followed by uprisings throughout the Continent. The King of Prussia was forced to grant a Constitution. A Parliament elected from the smaller German states met to establish a national confederation. The flight of the Austrian Emperor and his minister Metternich, the leader of the forces of reaction since the overthrow of Napoleon, left Vienna in the hands of a Committee of Public Safety. Nationalistic uprisings in Hungary and Italy threatened the break-up of the Austrian Empire. Rome, wrested from the temporal rule of the Pope, became the focus for a united Italy. The dreams of the eighteenth century seemed fulfilled.

But the power of liberalism proved unstable. In the hour of victory, economic policy brought out the latent division in France between the republicans, content with universal suffrage and a free press, and socialist critics of private property. Carried away by his own eloquence, Lamartine had guaranteed the "right to work," which committed the republicans, whom he represented, to the unwelcome experiment of Louis Blanc's national workshops. When one hundred thousand unemployed from the provinces arrived in Paris to be set to work, the republicans took care to place them under the direction of a covert enemy of the experiment, who put them at useless tasks. National elections in April for an Assembly to prepare a permanent Constitution revealed the numerical weakness of the socialists in a nation so largely agricultural. They elected one representative to every five republicans and three conservatives. The disillusion of the Parisian intellectuals had been forecast in the violent discouragement of Leconte de Lisle, who had campaigned for the socialists in Brittany: "How stupid this populace is! It's a race of slaves who cannot live without rod and yoke. . . . Let it die of hunger, then, this people easy to deceive, which soon will begin to massacre its true friends!" To replace the Provisional Government, the Assembly appointed an Executive Commission of antisocialist republicans, including Lamartine. In June they announced the abandonment of the national workshops for financial reasons. The unemployed were offered the choice of enlisting in the army or returning to their homes, where work was promised them. Refusal of both offers was supported by the Parisian masses, indignant at what they considered the betrayal of the cause for which they had taken up arms. Once more they barricaded the streets. This time the government, with sufficient regular troops, was the stronger. Some 4,000 insurgents were killed and 11,000 taken prisoners, the leaders later to be executed and many others transported to Algeria.

"The republic is dead," mourned Lamartine. The more log-

ical George Sand remarked: "I no longer believe in the existence of a republic which begins by massacring its proletarians." For the presidential election under the new Constitution held at the end of the year, a candidate appeared from exile, Louis-Napoleon, nephew of the great Corsican. His pamphlets on social questions, including *The Extinction of Pauperism*, made him acceptable to many workingmen now embittered against the republicans. The name Napoleon was popular among the peasants, who regretted the military glory of the Empire, and among Catholic conservatives, who remembered that the Emperor had maintained the temporal power of the Pope, now lost to Italian nationalists. Victor Hugo, who had done much to foster the Napoleonic legend and had received from Louis Napoleon a pledge of liberal policy, conducted newspaper propaganda in his favor. The leading republican candidate, General Cavaignac, who had put down the workers' revolt, could muster only a million and a half votes to Louis Napoleon's victorious five and a half million. Lamartine, repudiated by the workers for his failure to maintain the national workshops, yet suspected by the peasants for his continued support of the principle of the right to work, trailed behind with a humiliating vote of less than eighteen thousand. Louis Napoleon used his presidency to wrest Rome from the hands of the Italians, and at home, with the aid of the conservatives, to squeeze out the republicans, while the disillusioned socialists largely abstained from voting. Hugo, unrewarded by an important government post, began to warn the nation that the steady encroachment of the President upon the legislative power betrayed the design of a dictatorship. When Louis Napoleon put that design into execution on the anniversary of the battle of Austerlitz in 1851, Hugo and other Deputies rushed to the proletarian quarters of Paris to rouse resistance. They found the masses unwilling to risk their lives for a republic which had dealt with them so ungenerously.

Hugo anticipated the exiling of opposition leaders by fleeing

to Belgium and then to the British island of Jersey, just off the French coast. Vigny, having failed of election to the 1848 Assembly, had retired to his rural estate. Lamartine was politically discredited. Poets were at a discount in the new Empire.

The Liberal flood that had swept Europe in 1848 had receded with bewildering speed. France was the last nation to lose popular liberties. The intervention of autocratic Russia had helped Austria reabsorb Hungary and its Italian possessions, and Prussia had crushed democracy in the small German states. French capitalism was again in the saddle, even more firmly than under Louis-Philippe; for Napoleon III adroitly maintained his dictatorship by giving a free hand to big business and the Church, while dazzling the populace with pomp and sword-rattling. England, unshaken by revolution or counterrevolution, became the haven for refugees from a Continent returned to absolutism.



The year 1848 had profound repercussions in poetry. In the first flush of the uprising of February, Charles Baudelaire had founded with two friends an ephemeral revolutionary periodical, *Le Salut public*, to which the painter Courbet contributed a vignette. He followed the fashion of donning a workingman's blouse to show where his sympathies lay, and had a narrow escape from the barricades in the ill-fated June resurrection against the liquidation of the national workshops. But the fact of the Empire convinced him that universal suffrage was an absurdity, and social progress an illusion. Contemplation of a world in which generous impulses do not have the force of deeds inspired the savage blasphemy of "Le Reniement de Saint Pierre" (Saint Peter's Denial, 1857), which marks the turning of his verse to anarchic individualism. In the summer of 1848 his friend Leconte de Lisle, back from Brittany in time to witness the crushing of the socialists, had written to the poet Louis Ménard: "I cannot express to you the rage that burns

my heart as I watch impotently this slaughter of the republic that has been the sacred dream of my life." Before the steady march of reaction which pushed Lamartine from public life and drove Hugo into exile, Leconte de Lisle lost the confidence in the power of the poet over events which had inspired the past half-century. The Preface to his first volume, *Poèmes antiques*, appearing in the first year of the Empire, 1852, renounces for poetry both the present and the future. Its province is the past, when the young world had hope. In spite of his express repudiation of lyricism, hatred of the present and despair of the future are intoned in the majestic "Dies Irae" that closes the volume. And through the impassivity of his *Poèmes barbares* burst flashes of rebellion, sometimes from an antique theme such as "Quaïn" (Cain, 1869), sometimes openly against the triumphant plutocracy, as in the disdainful sonnet "Aux modernes" (To the Moderns, 1871):

Vous vivez lâchement, sans rêve, sans dessein,
Plus vieux, plus décrépits que la terre inféconde,
Châtrés dès le berceau par le siècle assassin
De toute passion vigoureuse et profonde.
Votre cervelle est vide autant que votre sein,
Et vous avez souillé ce misérable monde
D'un sang si corrompu, d'un souffle si malsain,
Que la mort germe seule en cette boue immonde.
Hommes, tueurs de Dieux, les temps ne sont pas loin
Où, sur un grand tas d'or vautrés dans quelque coin,
Ayant rongé le sol nourricier jusqu'aux roches,
Ne sachant faire rien ni des jours, ni des nuits,
Noyés dans le néant des suprêmes ennuis,
Vous mourrez bêtement, en emplissant vos poches.

You live like cowards, hopeless, purposeless,
Older, more wasted than the sterile earth,
Gelded from the cradle by the murderous age
Of every vigorous and virile passion.
Your brains are empty as your hearts are void,
And you have defiled this miserable world
With blood so corrupt, such pestilential breath

That death alone can sprout in this foul mud.
Murderers of Gods! the time is near
When, sprawled on a great heap of hoarded gold,
Having gnawed down to bare rock the nourishing soil,
Knowing not what to do with the days and the nights,
Drowned in the nothingness of utter boredom,
You will die stupidly, cramming your pockets.

An Englishman of the same generation, Arthur Hugh Clough, who had visited the Parisian national workshops in the fervor of his discipleship to Carlyle, kept up his flagging courage by the beautiful extended simile, "Say Not the Struggle Naught Availeth." His friend Matthew Arnold, who was behind the scenes as secretary to a member of the British Cabinet, had forewarned him of the probable disappointment of his social hopes in two sonnets "To a Republican Friend" (1848). Into poets coming to maturity after the turning point in European history that was 1848, entered a stronger admixture of the critical intellect. They were restrained from indulging generous and sanguine hopes by what Arnold called "sad lucidity of soul."

Not so Victor Hugo, who in vigorous middle life was sustained by the habits of an era when the voices of poets, including his own, had shaped events. The exile on the Channel island, with no weapon but his pen, strove to overthrow an Empire. To all but a sublime egoist, victory would have seemed impossible. But Hugo's pen had done much to build what it now turned to destroy. He took with seriousness his mandate as a God-endowed genius to be an instrument of universal justice, and spoke the language of the Hebrew prophets. He was nerved to battle by shame at the enslavement of his countrymen, by pity for humble victims of injustice, by sorrow at the relapse of Europe into reaction. His humiliation at his deception by Louis Napoleon, his determination to justify himself in the eyes of the world and regain the enormous popularity whose loss he felt with an intensity peculiar to the socially minded French, added personal motives to his wrath.

Les Châtiments (The Castigations), which he launched at the Emperor in 1853, is the best volume of political verse in the century. Its ninety-seven pieces, astonishingly various in tone and form, are fashioned for the widest of audiences, for the masses and the fastidious alike. The satirical verve and method recall Byron by a kaleidoscopic medley of realism and aspiration, of rhetoric and colloquial naturalness, of unscrupulous personalities and idealism. If humor enters only as parody and irony, the horror and the beauty, the climax and anticlimax of "L'Expiation," an epic confrontation of the great Napoleon and his petty nephew, outdoes Byron at his strongest points. And much of the volume is beyond Byron's range: nobly severe indignation, like Milton's and Wordsworth's, soaring Shelleyan lyricism and nature symbolism ("Stella"), and dramatic rendering of the pathos of humble life ("Souvenir de la Nuit du 4"). In "Joyeuse Vie" (Gay Life), the contrast of the successful and the submerged in an industrial society, partly based upon recollection of a visit in 1851 to cellar dwellings in Lille in the company of the labor leader Blanqui, enters major poetry for the first time. Hugo retorts brilliantly to the bored indifference of the imperial Court:

Bah! le poète! il est dans les nuages!—
Soit. Le tonnerre aussi.

Bah! the poet! he's in the clouds!—
Well! So is thunder.

Confidence in the power of ideas is dramatized impressively in "Sonnez, sonnez toujours, clairs de la pensée" (Blow, ever blow, clarions of the mind), which uses the eternally fresh symbol of the fall of the walls of Jericho.

Smuggled copies of *Les Châtiments*, read behind closed doors, helped keep alive internal opposition to the Empire and made converts among students attracted by the forbidden. Although fulfillment of the illustrious exile's oversanguine

hopes was constantly postponed, he was firm in refusing the amnesty offered in 1859.

Meanwhile in 1856, in a Paris given over to reaction, had died another dauntless exile, Heinrich Heine. On his bed of lingering death he had written "Enfant perdu" (1854), the most inspiring of expressions of steadfastness in the liberal faith, surpassing Hugo's celebrated "Ultima Verba" by its humor and avowal of fear and weakness:

Verlorner Posten in dem Freiheitskriege,
Heilt ich seit dreissig Jahren treulich aus.
Ich kämpfte ohne Hoffnung, das ich siege,
Ich wusste, nie komm ich gesund nach Haus.

Ich wachte Tag und Nacht—ich konnt nicht schlafen,
Wie in der Lagerzelt der Freunde Schar—
(Auch hielt das laute Schnarchen dieser Braven
Mich wach, wenn ich ein bisschen schlummrig war).

In jener Nächten hat Langweil ergriffen
Mich oft, auch Furcht—(nur Narren fürchten nichts)—
Sie zu verschauen hab ich dann gepiffen
Die frechen Reime eines Spottgedichts.

Ja, wachsam stand ich, das Gewehr im Arme,
Und nahte irgend ein verdächtger Gauch,
So schoss ich gut und jagte eine warme,
Brühwarne Kugel in den schnöden Bauch.

Mitunter freilich mocht es sich ereignen,
Das solch ein schlechter Gauch gleichfalls sehr gut
Zu schiessen wusste,—ach ich kanns nicht leugnen—
Die Wunde klaffen,—es verströmt mein Blut.

Ein Posten ist vakant!—Die Wunde klaffen—
Der Eine fällt, die Andere rücken nach—
Doch fall ich unbesiegt, und meine Waffen
Sind nicht gebrochen—Nur mein Herze brach.

A forlorn outpost in the war for freedom, for thirty years I faithfully defended. I fought without hope of winning; I knew I would never get home whole.

Day and night I kept watch. I could not sleep in the camp tent

like the band of my fellows (the loud snoring of those braves served to keep me awake, if I were a bit drowsy).

In those nights weariness often seized me, and fear, too (only fools fear naught); to drive them away, I whistled the bold rhymes of a mocking song.

Yes, awake I kept, gun on shoulder; and if a suspicious prowler came nigh, I shot straight, sent a scalding bullet into his vile paunch.

Meanwhile, of course, it might well be that such an evil prowler could shoot straight, too.—Oh, I can't deny it—my wounds gape and my blood pours out.

A post is vacant!—The wounds gape— One falls, the rest retreat. Yet I fall unconquered, my weapons still unbroken— Only my heart broke.

Hugo kept up his battle in the lyrical collection *Les Contemplations* (1855) with "Melancholia," a disturbing survey of social ills, and "Lueur au couchant" (Gleam at Evening), a homesick remembrance of the once free French people. The first volume of *La Légende des siècles* (The Legend of the Centuries, 1859) presents history as "a single and immense movement toward the light" in what seems today naïve alternation of blacks and whites.

In 1860 Napoleon III, ill, prematurely old and possibly suffering from a bad conscience, began an attempt to conciliate the intellectual classes and the workingmen, after having given impetus to the liberation of Italy by intervening against Austria in 1859. He allowed the formation of an opposition party and considerable freedom of the press. In 1864 he gave workingmen the right to form unions and to strike; in 1868, equality before the law in matters of contract. But ironically it was his collision with a more ruthless and efficient authoritarian power, Prussia, that liberated France from dictatorship, that unified Germany (1871), and that indirectly completed the unification of Italy by forcing the withdrawal of French troops from Rome in 1870. On September 5, 1870, five days after Napoleon III had been taken prisoner at Sedan, Victor Hugo was enthusiastically greeted by a free Paris; selections from *Les Châti-*

ments were recited before a jubilant crowd. But the poet had to endure the siege by the Prussians and afterward flee the city twice—from the red flag of the Commune and then from a sanguinary conservative reaction—before he saw the Third Republic established over smoldering class war.

In the momentous year 1871, which set up the régimes that were to endure in Germany and Italy until the upheavals after the World War of 1914-18 and in France to the present day, the dream of united republican states of Europe was urged for the last time in notable verse. A rebellious offshoot of the aristocracy like Byron and Shelley, Swinburne wrote *Songs before Sunrise* in an England whose rulers knew the secret of holding fast to the substance of power while yielding inessentials. They kept the masses quiet by a rising standard of living largely based upon exploitation of industrially undeveloped countries and by granting in 1867 the suffrage to industrial workers, without endangering the class system, capitalism, the monarchy or the Established Church. Looking back like Wordsworth to the unfulfilled promise of the seventeenth century, Swinburne asked reproachfully:

O Milton's land, what ails thee to be dead
Whose choice was in thy hand to be so great?
Who cast out of thy mind
The passion of man's kind,
And made thee and thine old name separate?

He saw the standard of liberty passing from England and exhausted France to reborn Italy, the land that had been the source of modern civilization. Rome should be the capital of the European Republic. But, alas! the actual Rome was still "rent in twain by King and Priest." From a century of revolution, only nationalism had emerged. Swinburne dedicated the volume to the illustrious exile Mazzini, who for four months in 1848 had been one of the republican rulers of the momentarily liberated Eternal City.

Stylistic splendors cannot conceal the vagueness and thinness

of this declaration of a vanquished faith. Swinburne was out of touch with the basic political and economic conditions of an industrial era, in which Germany and the United States had begun to challenge British supremacy.

Chapter Four

THE GLORY THAT WAS GREECE

WHERE NATURE is less wrapped in mists and heavy vapors, she gives the body earlier a riper form; and in Greece she is said to have brought men to the finest perfection," wrote Winckelmann in his inspired conjectures on the origins of Hellenic art. If the Appalachians and the Rockies had set up a barrier to the north winds by running east and west like the Alps, Americans could better comprehend the yearning of northern Europeans for Mediterranean lands. When we have adjusted our minds to the evidence of the atlas that Germany and England are in the latitude of Labrador and that New York has the sun of Constantinople and Naples, we, who take for granted pellucid skies, are prepared to envisage the land of Winckelmann; a land of pine forests dark against snow, of sandy plains and soggy marshes, where the sun struggling weakly with the mists is a pale disc compared with the flaming wheel of Italy and Greece. We begin to understand German literature; its lack of form, of definite beginning or ending, its Gothic murkiness and passionate excess, its yearning and its despair. We begin to understand its infatuation for its opposite, the literature of ancient Greece; a literature of black islands rising from an amethyst sea, of fruitful valleys of olive and fig dominated by bare mountains sharply outlined in the clearest of atmospheres; the literature of a climate without extremes, clairvoyant, intolerant of illusions and excess, bring-

ing to bear on life all the faculties at once, tempering imagination with reason, intellect with feeling, passion with meditation, and expressing its vision in harmonious form. It was this literature in its balanced perfection in the age of Sophocles that had sent the Prussian shoemaker's son on the arduous quest of the corresponding art. Winckelmann's great *History of Art among the Ancients* (1764) repaid his debt to literature by restoring the vanished Greeks to life and youth.

The Hellenes of Winckelmann's imagination were perfect men; perfected by a happy union of ideal climate with political freedom and substantial economic equality. They esteemed the artist and permitted his harmonious growth. Their sculptors and poets were primitives in the sense that they looked upon life freshly, without the intermediation of books and learning. They were faultless like Rousseau's natural man who has realized all human potentialities. Rousseau's natural man was the man of the doubtful future; Winckelmann's had already existed in Greece through conditions that might never recur. The final paragraph of *Art among the Ancients* is nostalgic for the irrevocable past:

I have already gone beyond the bounds of the history of art; notwithstanding that in contemplating art's downfall it has almost been with me as with one who in describing the history of his fatherland must touch upon its destruction, which he has himself witnessed. Yet I could not restrain myself from following the fate of works of art, as far as my eye could reach. So a woman at the sea-shore follows her departing lover with tearful eyes, without hope of seeing him again, and believes she sees the form of her beloved even in the distant sail.

Herder, an admirer of both Winckelmann and Rousseau, pushed the golden age of Greek literature back from the heyday of sculpture in the fifth century to the heroic and myth-creating era from Homer to Pindar. But he was confident that its like might come again in northern Europe, if modern man could free himself from bookish traditionalism and social shackles to look on the world with his own eyes, and to express

himself without inhibitions. In searching for the origins of the ode, he sensed behind Pindar and the dramatic choruses the original dithyramb, spontaneous outburst of Bacchic festivals. In Homer he saw a parallel to the Hebrew Testament, a record of racial culture in religious myth and heroic ballad. He agreed with Winckelmann as to the glory of Hellenic genius, but his emphasis was upon its sublimity arising from expression and naturalism rather than upon its "noble simplicity and quiet greatness." Winckelmann's ideal of plastic art was serene unalterability; Herder's literary ideal, perpetual dynamic growth. Each perceived one aspect of the Greek spirit; Herder what Nietzsche was to call the Dionysian, Winckelmann the Apollonian. The creative genius of Goethe was receptive to both.

At Leipzig Goethe had been trained in drawing by Winckelmann's friend Oeser, and had caught up the famous phrase "edle Einfalt und stille Grösse." But Greek poetry came to him through less reliable interpreters. In its prime from Homer to Theocritus, a longer period than from Dante to the present time, Hellenic verse had developed various styles, of which the self-conscious artifice of the Alexandrians was most congenial to the Romans and to their seventeenth- and eighteenth-century disciples. It was Alexandrian pastoral and amatory verse, in the diluted form of Franco-German translations and imitations, that formed Goethe's adolescent conception of Greek poetry. Homer he knew through a German version of Madame Dacier's prose translation. Hence the sudden intoxication of the strong wine of Homer and Pindar in the original poured out by Herder at Strassburg.

The immature energy of "Wandrer's Sturmlied" glows with gratitude to Pindar and his inspirers Dionysus and Phoebus Apollo, and the exuberant "An Schwager Kronos" (To Coachman Time) tempts Nemesis with overweening self-confidence. With more sober Titanism Goethe revived myths, magnificent and complementary, "Prometheus" the Zeus-defying, "Gany-mede" the Zeus-seeking. Not imitative in form or letter, not

archaizing, he expressed his own moods of rebellion and enthusiasm in Greek terms as naturally as in the spirit of Shakespeare or of Germanic legends.

Then Weimar and Frau von Stein. When a Greek theme reappears, the treatment has changed. *Iphigenie auf Tauris* is modeled after the drama of the fifth century, the period of Winckelmann's predilection. It imitates quantitative iambs, rationalizes religion after the manner of Euripides and Racine, and has Sophoclean restraint—without Sophoclean vigor. The carefully chiseled German iambs are magnificently sonorous, but in dreaming of Hellenic perfection in provincial Weimar, Goethe has lost solid footing. Free emulation has given way to conscious imitation, after the seductive prescription of Winckelmann's *On Imitating the Greeks* (1755).

The versifying of *Iphigenie* was completed in Italy. Europeans have remarked with amazement as well as amusement upon the spectacle, revealed in his *Italian Journey*, of the great Goethe, guidebook in hand, surveying antiquities with the painstaking docility of the ordinary German tourist. But Americans should have no difficulty in comprehending his humility. For they, too, have felt it imperative to see reverently with their own eyes what critics and copies have presented to their impressionable youth as unapproachable excellence. His coming upon an Italian lake whose waves had inspired a line of Virgil, "the first Latin verse whose subject is living before me," his first sight of a pagan temple, a small one at Assisi with overadorned Corinthian capitals of Augustus' time—such long-anticipated impressions swelled the excitement that swept Goethe toward Rome, "the capital of the world." In the unexpectedly arduous task of disengaging ancient Rome from the modern city, he followed the guidance of Winckelmann's *History*. Rome of that day could show practically nothing of fifth-century or archaic Greek sculpture; so he was unprepared when he journeyed southward for the Doric severity and grandeur of the corresponding architecture in the Paestum

temples: "The first impression could only arouse astonishment. I felt myself in a wholly alien world. . . . Nowadays our eyes and through them our whole inner being is directed to and formed by more slender architecture, so that these blunt, compressed masses of truncated columns appear oppressive, even frightful." His shrinking from these "gigantic forms" reveals quite another Goethe from the youth exultant before the immense façade of Strassburg Cathedral; a Goethe dominated by Roman and Renaissance taste. In Sicily, he gave reluctant tribute to Doric temples of less overwhelming proportions; but his ideal remained the Renaissance buildings of Palladio at Vicenza. Sicilian and Neapolitan landscapes, however, scenes of the *Odyssey*, were a key to Homer, and Homer to Greek poetic art:

Concerning Homer, a bandage has fallen from my eyes. The descriptions, the similes, seem to us poetic and yet are indescribably natural, though of course designed with a purity and an intimacy from which one starts back. Even the strangest fictitious events have a naturalness which I have never felt so vividly as in the vicinity of their scenes. Let me express my thoughts briefly thus: they [the Greek poets] represent reality, while we usually present its effect; they describe the terrible, we terribly; they the agreeable, we agreeably, etc. Whence comes everything mannered, all false grace, all bombast. If one works for the effect and only upon it, one never believes one has made it sufficiently vivid.

This discovery Goethe communicated by letter to Herder, as if endeavoring to convert the theorist of lyricism to the objective manner. When he returned to Rome, he saw drawings of the frieze of the Parthenon, but his high admiration of its beautiful simplicity did not lure him onward to Athens. Rome remained the scene of his obstinate efforts, guided by the German artistic colony and by Winckelmann's theories, to make of himself a painter, efforts without success which nevertheless were to have lasting effect upon his poetic creation. For he transferred to verse the technique of the plastic arts. Motion and ferment were superseded by deliberately sought repose.

But no longer with the bloodlessness of the Iphigenia conceived at Weimar. The luxuriance of Italy freed his senses. He bade farewell to Rome with two verses of the homesick exile Ovid. Ovid's Italy, the Italy of the Latin amorous poets, had sunk deepest into his heart. In animal passion for the young mistress he took into his house in defiance of Weimar, he momentarily revived its glow with *Römische Elegien* (Roman Elegies, 1788; 1795). But what these pagan exotics gained in sensuousness, they lost by self-conscious aestheticism:

Und belehr ich mich nicht, indem ich des lieblichen Busen
 Formen spähe, die Hand leise die Hüften hinab?
 Dann versteh ich den Marmor erst recht; ich denk und vergleiche,
 Sehe mit fühlenden Aug, fühle mit sehender Hand.

.

Oftmals hab ich auch schon in ihren Armen gedichtet
 Und des Hexameters Mass leise mit fingernder Hand
 Ihr auf den Rücken gezählt.

And do I not teach myself, as the forms of my darling's bosom
 I spy on, slip softly my hand down her thighs?
 Then first I know marble aright, I think and liken,
 See with the feeling eye, feel with the seeing hand.

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Oft-times, too, verses while clasped in her arms I have written,
 The hexameter's beat softly with fingering hand
 Told off on her back.

Cool calculation which found in everything food for self-culture drove out the spontaneity of the early love lyrics. Herder failed to sympathize with this manner, that ran counter to his critical doctrine; and most of the Weimar group held aloof. The ensuing five years were among the most barren of Goethe's poetic career.

Then came Schiller's letter of August 23, 1794, hailing him as a Greek born out of due place and time, handicapped by the need to reach by rational means what Greece would have supplied without his efforts: "selected Nature and an idealizing

power." Goethe shook off discouragement. Evidently if Schiller, who knew him but slightly, could perceive the affinity of his temperament to the Hellenic, he must be on the right path and needed only to persevere. He would try to be the German Homer. The way had been partially cleared by his contemporary Voss, who after conspicuous success in translating the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey* into German hexameters, had applied the hexameters and the idyllic patriarchal style of the *Odyssey* to a theme of humble German life in *Luise* (1795). Goethe's *Hermann und Dorothea* (1796; 1797), the love idyll of a Rhenish tavernkeeper's son and a girl fleeing with her fellow villagers before French troops, employed a style suggested by the Homeric domestic scenes and by Greek sculpture of a much later era. The sculptural style conflicted with the Homeric, slowing the tempo and putting the plebeian lovers in incongruously stately attitudes. When Dorothea, having sprained her ankle, falls upon Hermann's shoulder,

So stand er
Starr wie ein Marmorbild, von ernsten Willen gebändigt,
Drückte nicht fester sie an,

Thus stood he
Stiff as a statue; restrained by sternest will-power,
Drew her no closer,

exemplary in Winckelmannian self-control. The odds against success were almost impossible. Yet the idyll came alive through the skill in depicting small souls already practiced in *Wilhelm Meister*. Its great popularity emboldened Goethe to rival Homer on his own ground by continuing the *Iliad* to the death of Achilles. All that genius, minute study of a superlatively great model, plenteous advice from Schiller on aesthetic problems, and dogged perseverance from December, 1797, to April, 1799, could accomplish was a fragmentary "Achilleis" of 650 lines, cold and dull. Undaunted, a year later Goethe assumed the manner, the iambs and even the chorus of Greek tragedy

to introduce Helen of Troy into the Second Part of *Faust*. Once Aeschylus had inspired him to a "Prometheus," but that day of free emulation, unhampered by theories of form, was over. The Helen broke short with 265 lines, and was not resumed for twenty-four years. "I was glad when I had consumed my Northern inheritance and turned to the tables of the Greeks," Goethe told Eckermann in 1826. But after the Italian journey, those tables failed to nourish. A supreme lyric genius had been led tragically astray. The conscientious tourist, art student, and exponent of culture had cheated the poet, to whom Italy's best gift had been the yearning for her unseen that throbs in "Kennst du das Land."

Yet the sight of Italy was not necessarily fatal to a writer emulous of the Greeks. The French poet André Chénier, thirteen years younger than Goethe, had preceded him by two years in a journey toward the Grecian archipelago, cut short by illness in Naples. Like Goethe, he was influenced by the revival of classical archeology with the discovery of Herculaneum and the renewed excavation at Pompeii, which was giving the Louis XVI style severer lines than the rococo. Chénier's Winckelmann was the Count de Caylus (*Recueil d'antiquités*, 1752-1767; *Tableaux d'Homère et de Virgile*, 1757), in whose studio the painter David was trained. Goethe's mistakes Chénier escaped partly by instinct—for his mother was Greek—and partly by choice of less ambitious models. Not sculpture but bas-reliefs and medallions with their simple sureness of line, not heroic drama and epic but the lighter and later poets, Theocritus and the Sicilians, the Anthologists, the Anacreontists, were the school for his exquisite short idylls "La Jeune Tarentine," "Le Jeune Malade," "La Liberté." "L'Aveugle," a tribute to the blind and aged Homer of legendary Homeric hymn, in tone, imagery, and grace of mythological allusion enters the Hellenic mind. At the height of his promise, Chénier was guillotined near the close of the Reign of Terror in 1794.

In 1788, while Goethe was playing gracefully with my-

thology in the *Roman Elegies*, Schiller burst into lament for the death of the Greek gods. The plaint was not new in poetry, but its passionate sincerity was. The answering of each yearning feminine rhyme with a blunt masculine echoing the stern negations of science haunts the memory with ineradicable desolation. Schiller, soon plunging into abstract aesthetics, never touched a Hellenic theme again with such felicity; but "Die Götter Griechenlands" (The Gods of Greece) long dominated the imagination of a far greater lyricist, Friedrich Hölderlin.

Poverty prevented Hölderlin, as it had Schiller, from seeing Greece or even Italy. Outwardly his life was uneventful: a preparation for the Lutheran ministry completed at Tübingen in 1793; a broadening of his religious horizon by philosophy and by Greek literature which made him avoid assuming a pastorate, although the alternative was a bare livelihood from private tutoring. But his inner life was of the utmost intensity. Highly impressionable, he was exposed to extraordinary personalities and events and to a ferment of ideas. The philosophers Schelling and Hegel were his friends and fellow students at Tübingen; at Jena he met Fichte, Herder, Schiller, and Goethe. He read with enthusiasm Rousseau, Kant, Pindar, Plato, and Winckelmann. The French Revolution was offering Europe the liberty and equality which Winckelmann had found among the roots of Hellenic perfection.

Yet nowhere in the mighty drama of the present could Hölderlin find a people who gave poets a place of honor and drew their religion from the wonder and beauty of nature. In the sunset he saw Apollo with his golden lyre departing unobserved and with unheard music from mankind

zu frommen Völkern
Die ihn noch ehren.

to pious peoples
Who still honor him.

"Sonnenuntergang" (Sunset, wr. 1799) anticipates Wordsworth's outburst in 1807:

Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathed horn.

Contemplation of the gulf between the divine and the human, the theme of Goethe's stately, resigned "Grenzen der Menschheit," fills Hölderlin's "Schicksalslied" (Song of Fate, 1799) with tense yearning and utter despair:

Ihr wandelt droben im Licht
Am weichen Boden, selige Genien!
Glänzende Götterlufte
Rühren euch leicht,
Wie die Finger der Künstlerin
Heilige Saiten.

Schicksallos, wie der Schlafende
Säugling, atmen die Himmlischen;
Keusch bewahrt
In bescheidener Knospe
Blühet ewig
Ihnen der Geist,
Und die seligen Augen
Blicken in stiller
Ewiger Klarheit.

Doch uns ist gegeben,
Auf keiner Stätte zu ruhn,
Es schwinden, es fallen
Die leidenden Menschen
Blindlings von einer
Stunde zu andern,
Wie Wasser von Klippe
Zu Klippe geworfen,
Jahrlang ins Ungewisse hinab.

You walk up there in the light
On yielding ground, holy Deities!
Divine bright breezes
Touch you softly,
As the artist's fingers
Holy chords.

Fateless, like the sleeping
Infant, breathe the Divinities,
Chastely preserved
In modest budding
Blossoms ever their spirit,
And their holy eyes
Gaze with quiet
Eternal clearness.

But for us is appointed
No place of abiding,
We dwindle, we drop down,
Suffering mortals,
Blindly from one hour
Into another,
Like water from cliff
To cliff thrown
Yearlong down into the abyss.

It became intolerable to concede with Schiller that such gods had vanished forever except as beautiful ideals. Hölderlin's intuition of the divinity of nature was warrant of their existence. And did not the tremendous upheavals of the Revolution portend some mighty change in human destiny, such as that when Bacchus brought from the Orient inspiration for Greece? The prophetic ears of poets ought already to have caught the significance of the thunder of Napoleon's armies. Since it was evident from history that

wie der Frühling, wandelt der Genius
Von Land zu Land,

like spring, divinity wanders
From land to land,

could its next sojourn be in Germany, where military weakness was compensated by a reviving feeling for nature which might make its people worthy to receive the Olympians? Meditation on these possibilities made them certainties for Hölderlin's deeply religious mind. The hexameters of "Der Archipelagus" (The Archipelago, wr. 1800) pass from glowing description of the coming of spring in the Grecian Isles with their imperishable memories to proclamation of the imminent reappearance of their gods across the Alps, bringing Hellenic perfection. But such moments of assurance that he was the chosen vessel of a revelation were paid for by depression when the vision failed. Hölderlin transferred his exhaustion and anguish to fragments of a drama on the death of Empedocles, in which the nature gods withdraw from communion with the Sicilian poet-philosopher after he has tasted its rapture.

The Treaty of Lunéville in 1800, which by recognizing Napoleon's conquest of a "natural frontier" for France at the Rhine seemed to guarantee the stable peace necessary for the reconstruction of European civilization, gave Hölderlin confidence in his mission. In great odes with unrhymed free rhythms he assumed Pindar's role of poet-priest to announce the spiritual awakening of the German people. His Dionysian enthusiasm he confined within a ripe, compassed art, assimilated from fifth-century Greek verse, especially the choruses of Sophocles. Hölderlin's tone, solemn as befits his message, is never pretentious; he is rapid and fluent where the later Goethe is sculpturally static. Unaffected diction completes the effect of severe simplicity.

"Der Rhein" (wr. 1801) symbolizes Hölderlin's perverse destiny by that of the river, born in the Alpine watershed with a desire to flow southward to Greece, but compelled northward for the good of Germany. The description of Fate is Sophoclean in majesty:

Wie du anfangst, wirst du bleiben,
So viel auch wirkt die Not

Und die Zucht; das meiste nämlich
 Vermag die Geburt,
 Und der Lichtstrahl, der
 Dem Neugeborenen begegnet.

As thou didst begin, thou shalt remain,
 So much availeth Fate
 And rearing; most sway
 Hath the lot of birth
 And the light-beam, that
 Meeteth the newly born.

The gods, whose own lives are destitute of emotions, contrive to have them vicariously through men; but alas for those mortals chosen,

Denn schwer ist zu tragen
 Das Unglück, aber schwerer das Glück.

For hard it is to bear
 Misfortune, but fortune still harder.

Yet in the triumphant "Wie wenn am Feiertage" Hölderlin bids his fellow poets take courage in conducting the heavenly fire to earth:

Denn sind nur reinen Herzens,
 Wie Kinder, wir, sind schuldlos unsere Hände,
 Des Vaters Strahl, der reine, versegnet nicht.

For we only are pure in heart,
 Like children, we, our hands guiltless;
 The Father's ray, being pure, does not burn.

The hexameters of "Brot und Wein" (Bread and Wine, wr. 1802) tell the story of the intermittence of the communion of the gods with men, requiring mediators like Bacchus and Jesus and frequently withdrawn, since mankind cannot always dwell on the heights.

As if the burden of the Olympians were not enough for Hölderlin's mortal flesh, the Christ of his early years began to protest within him at this reconciliation and equation of reli-

gions. "Der Einzige" (The Peerless, wr. 1802) announces the end of this conflict of warm German piety with the shining but unfeeling gods of Greece in the recognition of the claim of Jesus to unapproachable holiness. The incoherence of this ode betrays the mental breakdown which the split in Hölderlin's personality had brought. He lived on from thirty-two to seventy-three without regaining sanity.

Published largely in periodicals of small circulation and often left in manuscript, Hölderlin's verse was little known to his contemporaries. Its greatness is a discovery of the twentieth century, which places him among German lyricists only below Goethe, to whom he yields chiefly in substantiality and variety. His poetry is like the Greek *aether* which inspired some of its finest passages, sublime but too rarefied long to be breathed; yet the firmness of its form and the purity of its diction almost conceal the inner extravagance. Here is the crowning glory of the Hellenism initiated by Winckelmann, for which Hölderlin fell a sacrifice to the *daimon* from which Goethe had shrunk for fear of being consumed. Here is the climax but not the end of the strange chapter of unbalanced Teutonic devotion to what Hölderlin called the "terrifying glory" of Greece, which, unshaken by the scoffing parodies of Heine's *Der Nordsee*, sent the successful business man Schliemann to find in the eighteen-seventies the site of a no longer mythical Troy.



The nationalism aroused by the French Revolution gave Hellenism new direction and impetus. The ancient Greeks, saviors of Europe from the Asiatic menace of the Persian host, were invoked as the highest symbol of the defense of freedom. The battle of Marathon, celebrated in Hölderlin's "Archipelagus," restored to Italian verse a long absent masculine and majestic music in Foscolo's "I Sepolcri" (1807). The subjection of the modern Greeks to the rule of the Asiatic, Moham-

medan Turks was an intolerable reversal of values for European liberals, who mistakenly pictured them as pure-blooded descendants of the ancient Hellenes.

The greatest literary influence for their liberation was Lord Byron. Returning from an adventurous journey to Greece while war with Napoleon was raging, he published in the *Spenserian stanza* an account of his travels, and awoke one morning in 1812 to find himself famous as the author of *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*. The facile rhetoric of the Second Canto which voices sympathy with the Greek cause is inferior not only to the finished artistry of Hölderlin and Foscolo but even to the turgid yet fiery rhetoric of the immature Leopardi's evocation in "All' Italia" (1818) of Salamis and Thermopylae. But it reached the largest reading public of the time, and by lending itself easily to translation gained international currency. Byron kept the spotlight on Greece by highly spiced, exotic tales in verse, by *The Curse of Minerva* (1815) excoriating Lord Elgin for having removed to London the frieze of the Parthenon, which should have remained in Athens to become the national treasure of a liberated people, and by the idyllic Haidée scenes in *Don Juan*, with their curious blend of primitivism and cynical realism. Readers of the patriotic song, "The Isles of Greece," in *Don Juan* disregarded the author's mocking comment,

Thus sung, or would, or could, or should have sung,
The modern Greek, in tolerable verse,

in recalling its third stanza:

The mountains look on Marathon—
And Marathon looks on the sea;
And musing there an hour alone,
I dreamed that Greece might still be free;
For standing on the Persians' grave,
I could not deem myself a slave,

when the news came in 1824 that Byron had died a soldier's death in the Hellenic cause. He had immense posthumous influence in the international sympathy, inspiring much mediocre and execrable verse, which had satisfaction in the achievement of Grecian independence in 1830 by British, French, and Russian aid. Byron's poetry was Hellenic neither in spirit nor in style; for him, Rome was "the city of the soul." But the role he had played in the freeing of modern Greece brought him into the Helena episode (1827) of the Second Part of *Faust* as Euphorion, the child of Helen and Faust, symbolic of the union of the Greek and the Northern spirits.



The marbles Lord Elgin had transported from Athens were acquired by the nation and, crowded and ill-arranged, were displayed to public gaze in the then inadequate quarters of the British Museum. Among the visitors in 1817 was a young man of twenty-two, who had recently abandoned the medical profession for the venture of achieving recognition as a poet before his tiny capital was exhausted. Nothing had prepared John Keats for the perfection of Mediterranean art. His conception of poetry was almost completely Northern; born only three years before the publication of *Lyrical Ballads*, he had been nurtured in the revolt from French taste. His bent was toward lusciousness, sentimentality, formlessness—the opposite pole from the Greeks. His lower-middle-class origin had prevented his learning Greek, which was returning to favor in schools for the upper classes. But the Elizabethan fire of Chapman's translation of Homer had inspired him to a fine sonnet, and had opened the imaginative possibilities of the great myths. Now the marvelous sculpture spoke without need of interpreter. An unequal sonnet reveals the turmoil aroused by the silent, peremptory command to unlearn much, and to strive for the remote and probably inaccessible:

My spirit is too weak—mortality
 Weighs heavily on me like unwilling sleep,
 And each imagin'd pinnacle and steep
 Of godlike hardship tells me I must die
 Like a sick Eagle looking at the sky.

The myth of Endymion chosen as a test of his invention became overadorned and sprawling. But "Lamia," with a Greek hero like the gods in the frieze, "a young Jove with calm uneager face," was an amazing leap forward in a few months toward clarity of outline, aided by study in the hitherto despised school of Dryden's versification. And only two years after Keats's sight of the Elgin marbles, Greek art wrought a miracle. As in the early Renaissance, Botticelli, who had seen no Greek painting or sculpture, transferred his impressions from Greek literature to canvas in his immortally fresh Aphrodite rising from the sea, so, conversely, Keats put his delight in Greek vase ornament into an "Ode on a Grecian Urn" (1820), which in a celebrated stanza achieved the objectivity Hellenic lyricism had inherited from the epic:

Who are these coming to the sacrifice?
 To what green altar, O mysterious priest,
 Leadst thou that heifer lowing at the skies,
 And all her silken flanks with garlands drest?
 What little town by river or sea shore,
 Or mountain-built with peaceful citadel,
 Is emptied of this folk, this pious morn?
 And, little town, thy streets for evermore
 Will silent be; and not a soul to tell
 Why thou art desolate, can e'er return.

Such creation was not merely the result of interpretive instinct; intellectually Keats was aware of the salutary curb on his temperament Greek art was exercising. Simultaneously with the composition of this ode, he was writing half seriously to his brother George concerning the ballad "La Belle Dame sans Merci": "Why four kisses—you will say—why four, because I wish to restrain the impetuosity of my Muse—she would have

fain said 'score' without hurting the rhyme—but we must temper the Imagination, as the Critics say, with Judgment." In the same year Keats published a fragment of an epic on the overthrow of the Titan sun-god Hyperion by the Olympian Apollo, whose unfinished Fourth Book has Homeric moments:

While from beneath some cumbrous boughs hard by
 With solemn step an awful Goddess came,
 And there was purport in her looks for him,
 Which he with eager face began to read
 Perplex'd, the while melodiously he said:
 'How cam'st thou over the unfooted sea?
 Or hath that antique mien and robed form
 Moved in these vales invisible till now?
 Sure I have heard those vestments sweeping o'er
 The fallen leaves, when I have sat alone
 In cool mid-forest. Surely I have traced
 The rustle of those ample skirts about
 These grassy solitudes, and seen the flowers
 Lift up their heads, and still the whisper pass'd.
 Goddess! I have beheld those eyes before,
 And their eternal calm, and all that face,
 Or I have dream'd.'

The too rapid ripening of creative powers and the stress of poverty-thwarted love sapped Keats's strength. His yearning for "the warm South" was gratified too late. In 1820-1821 he saw Naples and Rome with dying eyes.

Keats's spiritual pilgrimage to Greece would have been shortened immeasurably if it had begun where his bodily journey ended. Italian birth would have given him the advantage of a native literature as directly the heir of Rome as Rome was of Greece. It had been Italians who recovered from Constantinople Greek classics, including Homer, long lost to Western Europe. They moved under the same brilliant sky as the Athenian and their land was the same bold confrontation of sea with mountain, softened by flowery valleys silvered with olive trees. To these racial advantages were added for Giacomo

Leopardi, three years Keats's junior, the high sense of personal dignity and the sureness of taste that can come of noble birth. What for Keats and for Goethe had been a comparatively late inspiration and discipline, was for him a steady, partly unconscious assimilation from childhood.

With an instinct as sure as Winckelmann's, Leopardi taught himself Greek in order to read the thronged volumes in his father's library, stocked at bargain rates from monasteries dissolved by Napoleon. These books revealed his vocation. "I did not believe I was a poet," Leopardi recollected, "until I had read several Greek poets." His taste, like that of his era, began with the Alexandrians. At sixteen he made verse translations from the *Anthology*; at seventeen, from the idylls of Moschus. But by eighteen he was so saturated with earlier Greek poetry that scholars were deceived by Italian verses of his own composition purporting to be the translation of an unpublished Attic hymn to Neptune, possibly of the fifth century. "Enamoured of Greek poetry, I wished to do like Michelangelo, who buried his Cupid and to those who thought it antique when dug up, brought the missing arm," Leopardi explained to the mature man of letters Pietro Giordani, whom his amazing precocity had made his admiring mentor. Giordani deepened Leopardi's interest in Greek style by pointing out its affinities with Italian of the fourteenth century. The masterpieces of this great era of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, the young poet began to study with the imagination of a born philologist: "I now live, whenever I can, with the men of the fourteenth century, enamoured of their way of writing; and I not only understand, but see and touch with my hand, that whereas the Latin style transferred to this language can only lie there very hard and . . . all in a lump, the Greek style adapts and bends itself to it and is so soft, dulcet, natural, easy, graceful that it stays in place as if fashioned purposely."

Already "immoderate desire for glory" had ruined Leopardi's eyes, curved his spine and undermined his health irreparably,

but his labor in pursuit of perfection increased with the years. The poetry of antiquity, he believed, excelled in style, as that of modern nations in thought: "It has been observed that the ancient classics not only lose much in translation, but even do not seem to have any value or substance"; [while] "whatever modern style has propriety, force, simplicity, nobility, has always an antique flavor and does not seem modern." In style at its perfection among the Greeks, naked words, pared of superfluity and in the order natural to the language, attain their effect by reason of choice and position only; an art felicitously described by Professor Gilbert Murray in terms of Greek architecture: "The pillar that looks straight is really a thing of subtle curves." In the Italian poetic language, fashioned by great writers five centuries before and since enriched, Leopardi had an instrument for attaining Hellenic fluidity and concision. For, like Greek, it abounded in light syllables, almost every word ending in a vowel; and it could rival Greek in density through the copiousness of a vocabulary tolerant of archaisms and synonyms, through the license of retaining or truncating inflections, and through the ability to dispense with pronouns. To these advantages of his medium, Leopardi added almost incredible labor of the file learned from the Romans. In the first heat of creation he dashed down a prose sketch, and usually did not versify until the return of another inspired moment. He then kept manuscripts by him for minute changes, often for years. Thus certain early poems, "*L'infinito*," composed when he was twenty-one and "*La sera di un dì di festa*" of the year following, when published in 1825 had achieved the union of formal perfection with imagination, passion and subtlety which characterizes his best work. "*L'infinito*" (Infinity), compressed to fifteen lines, contrives a tremendous effect with the simplest means: a lonely hill with a hedge shutting out the horizon, and the voyaging of the poet's thought into space and time. The unoratorical emphasis of "*L'ultimo canto di Saffo*" (Sappho's Last Poem) demonstrates the pos-

sibilities of Italian as a synthetic language. Study of tragic choruses and of the early fifth-century epitaphist Simonides resulted in an unforgettable "Coro di morti" (Chorus of the Dead, 1824), in which mummies temporarily resuscitated state with glacial calm their preference of death to life:

Sola nel mondo eterna, a cui si volge
Ogni creata cosa,
In te, morte, si posa
Nostra ignuda natura;
Lieta non, ma sicura
Dall'antico dolor. Profonda notte
Nella confusa mente
Il pensier grave oscura;
Alla speme, al desio, l'arido spirto
Lena mancar si sente:
Così d'affanno e di temenza è sciolto,
E l'età vote e lente
Senza tedio consuma.
Vivemmo: e qual di paurosa larva,
E di sudato sogno,
A lattante fanciullo erra nell'alma
Confusa ricordanza:
Tal memoria n'avanza
Del viver nostro; ma da tema è lunge
Il rememrar. Che fummo?
Che fu quel punto acerbo
Che di vita ebbe nome?
Cosa arcana e stupenda
Oggi è la vita al pensier nostro, e tale
Qual de'vivi al pensiero
L'ignota morte appar. Come da morte
Vivendo rifuggia, così rifugge
Dalla fiamma vitale
Nostra ignuda natura;
Lieta no ma sicura;
Però ch'esser beato
Nega ai mortali e nega a'morti il fato.

Alone on earth eternal, to whom revert
All things created,

In thee, death, reposes
Our naked nature;
Joyful, no, but secure
From the ancient pain. Deep night
In the confused mind
Obscures the grievous thought;
For hope, for longing, the arid spirit
No longer has breath;
So from fear and pain is released,
And the aeon slow and empty
Spends without tedium.
Once we lived: and as in the infant
Wanders confused remembrance
Of frightful ghosts
And cold sweat in dreams,
Only such recollection
Have we of life; but far from fear
It lies. What were we?
What was that bitter point
Called life?
Something secret, stupendous
Now life seems to us, and such as
To the thought of the living
Death unknown appears. As while living
It fled from death, so flees
From the flame of life
Our naked nature;
Joyful, no, but secure;
Since Fate denies the living and the dead
The chance to be happy.

The remaining years of Leopardi's life—like Pope's a "long disease" which brought death at thirty-seven—were even more meticulous in workmanship. Assurance and firmness of statement increasingly dispensed with rhyme and figures of speech. In "A Sylvia" (To Sylvia, 1831) and "Le ricordanze" (Memories, 1831) his style proved flexible to emotion shifting rapidly from ecstasy to despair. "La quiete dopo la tempesta" and "Il sabato del villaggio" are original developments of the Theocritan idyll of humble life. They open with scenes in Leo-

pardi's native Recanati: the greeting of the sun after a severe thunder storm by a chorus of song birds joined by the cackle of a hen running out into the street; Saturday evening preparation for a Sunday's pleasure and rest. They close with interpretation of the inner meaning of these seemingly happy scenes. Extended irony is implicit in the apparently artless "Canto notturno di un pastore errante dell' Asia" (Night Song of a Wandering Asian Shepherd, 1831), in which observation and philosophic comment coalesce. At Naples, where he spent his last two years, Leopardi saw one of those Greek gravestones that are so deeply moving in the representation of death as a scene of quiet parting, as if for a journey. The resulting ode, "Sopra un basso rilievo antico sepolcrale" (1835), offers comparison with Keats's "Ode on a Grecian Urn." Both poets pass from objective description of a work of art to philosophic generalization from it: Keats to "Beauty is truth, truth beauty," Leopardi to the indifference of nature to human feeling.



The subsidence of the revolutions of 1848 left an imprint on the Hellenism of a French and an English poet who were almost exact contemporaries, Leconte de Lisle (1818-1894) and Matthew Arnold (1822-1888).

After bitter experience with practical politics, Leconte de Lisle took refuge from Napoleon III and plutocracy in the past, especially in ancient Greece. In reaction against the oversanguine lyricism of Lamartine and Hugo, he championed the objectivity of Greek verse and of science, which faced facts without coloring them with desire or fear. Yet beneath the marmoreal surface of his verse on some forty Hellenic themes from *Poèmes antiques* (1852) to the posthumous *Derniers poèmes* (1895) lies lyric faith in the Greece of Winckelmann, the home of freedom and beauty. Perfect men and women in perpetual sunlight grow monotonous when not relieved by the

poet's instinct for the primitive ("Héraclès au taureau," "Le Combat Homérique") and by tropical color drawn from his native Île Bourbon, frequently too vivid for the real Greece he never saw. Leconte de Lisle dominated French treatment of Hellenic themes in the latter half of the century, including the thirty-nine sonnets of the first section of *Les Trophées* (Trophies, 1893), marvels of objective vision, condensation, and brilliant finish by another child of the tropics, José Maria de Heredia.

Matthew Arnold, an historian's son and himself historically minded, did not see Greece so simply as the antithesis of all that discouraged the European liberal. He knew the changes in Greek character and art from the Homeric dawn to the Hellenistic decline, and saw an analogy to his own era in the beginning of the decline: "What those who are familiar only with the great monuments of early Greek genius suppose to be its exclusive characteristics, have disappeared; the calm, the cheerfulness, the disinterested objectivity have disappeared: the dialogue of the mind with itself has commenced; modern problems have presented themselves; we hear already the doubts, we witness the discouragement, of Hamlet and Faust." To indicate his own disadvantage in appearing late in the history of European poetry, he prefixed to the third edition of his poems in 1853 Greek verses by Choerilus of Samos, conscious of a similar handicap at the end of the fifth century B.C.: "Blessed he who was skilled in song, server of the Muses, when the meadow was still unshorn. For now, when all is divided and the arts have their bounds, we are left as those hindmost in a race." The title piece of his preceding volume, *Empedocles on Etna* (1852), had been a parable of the mid-century confusion and uncertainty in an antique setting; the Greek colony of Sicily after the fifth-century harmony of Hellenic life had been broken by the Sophistic movement and the decline of Athens. Independently, Arnold had chosen as protagonist of his drama a figure that had fascinated

Hölderlin: the philosopher-poet Empedocles, who, despondent at the ingratitude of the people of Agrigentum whom he had delivered from a tyrant, threw himself into the crater of Etna. Arnold's interpretation of Empedocles' character differs from Hölderlin's in an important respect: he represents him as having lost faith in the gods. The short drama is chiefly an antiphony in which Callicles, hymning myths like a serene Sophoclean chorus, draws unheard replies from the stern recitative of Empedocles, questioning their morality. Empedocles' disgust at the pettiness of men includes disgust at the gods, whose deeds resemble theirs. His scientific vision of nature strips the world bare of nature myths. But he is equally dissatisfied with himself, for his restless analytic mind has robbed the world of beauty. His soul regains its glow at the sight of the crater's sea of fire; he plunges in to escape the inevitable return of despondency. And, unaware, Callicles continues to sing of the calm beauty of Apollo and the Muses.

Arnold repented the publication of *Empedocles*, seeing no benefit to his readers from the spectacle of hopeless suffering, which reflected their predicament without suggesting means of regaining the lost harmony and joy of an age of faith. Thenceforward he selected for their encouragement models conveying the "sanity" of the "unrivalled" poetry of Greece in its most fortunate epochs: Homer, "clearest soul'd of men," and Sophocles, whom

Business could not make dull, nor Passion wild;
Who saw life steadily, and saw it whole.

These models, he hoped, might also correct by their "architecture" the lack of form encouraged in the contemporary English verse by the national idolatry of Shakespeare. The wheel of the reaction against Racine and Boileau had come full circle.

These directly didactic efforts were not fortunate. *Sobrab and Rustum* (1853) is little more than an academically cor-

rect introduction to the Homeric manner for those who do not read Greek. After having pointed out in the admirable preface to his *Merope*, a tragedy in the Greek form on the theme of a lost play by Euripides, the vital difference between Goethe's interpretation of Hellenic repose as "avoiding agitating matter" and Sophocles' practice of "exhibiting the most agitating matter under conditions of the severest form," Arnold failed to engender sufficient passion to justify his own method of restraint.

But in verse strongly impelled from within, and without didactic intentions upon wayward British taste, Arnold fell into a style influenced by his admiration for Greek poetry. The precision of his perceptions and statements escapes the outer and inner haziness of the English atmosphere into "Plainness and clearness without shadow of stain." His unrhymed free rhythms, like those of Milton's *Samson Agonistes*, have assimilated the firmness, the subtle pauses of their Hellenic prototypes:

What girl
Now reads in her bosom as clear
As Rebekah read, when she sate
At eve by the palm-shaded well?
Who guards in her breast
As deep, as pellucid a spring
Of feeling, as tranquil, as sure?

In "The Strayed Reveller" (1849) every object is sharply and delicately delineated without the aid of a single figure of speech. A passage in "In Utrumque Paratus" blends pauses, repetition, and imagery into the majestic movement of the "grand style" of antiquity:

Thin, thin the pleasant human noises grow;
And faint the city gleams;
Rare the lone pastoral huts: marvel not thou!
The solemn peaks but to the stars are known,
But to the stars, and the cold lunar beams:

Alone the sun arises, and alone
Spring the great streams.

The subject of "The Forsaken Merman" (1849) is Northern, the abandonment of a merman by a mortal woman. The symbolism is contemporary and personal, for the Christian church divides those lovers as it divided the unorthodox Arnold from most of his contemporaries. The treatment is Hellenic in its severe plainness, without figures or other ornament, and in its restraint of emotion. The inability of the merman to maintain proud self-sufficiency is betrayed by the alteration of a few words in a refrain, whereby

Here came a mortal,
But faithless was she.
And alone dwell forever
The kings of the sea.

becomes

There dwells a lov'd one,
But cruel is she.
She left lonely forever
The kings of the sea.

Theme, symbolism, and style are fused in a harmony demonstrating Arnold's conviction that unity derives from the tone of the creating mind. His poems are distinguished for solidity of construction masked by grace of transition, in which the elegy *Thyrsis* (1866) is preëminent. Even more than its great English predecessors *Lycidas* and *Adonais*, *Thyrsis* is built upon the pastoral framework set up by the Sicilian Greeks; nothing could be more ingenious than the adaptation of myth and pastoral convention to Oxfordshire scenery and to the problems of Victorian England.

With these Hellenic elements, *Thyrsis* joins an opulent appeal to the senses unusual in Arnold's verse and reminiscent of Keats. Conversely, Keats's disciple Tennyson tempers his natural ornateness with Greek severity in treating the myth

of "Tithonus" (1860). Tennyson's closing verse paragraphs are a bold and successful juxtaposition of the decorative and suggestive manners with the plain and definite:

Ay me! ay me! with what another heart
In days far-off, and with what other eyes
I used to watch—if I be he that watch'd—
The lucid outline forming round thee; saw
The dim curls kindle into sunny rings;
Changed with thy mystic change, and felt my blood
Glow with the glow that slowly crimsoned all
Thy presence and thy portals, while I lay,
Mouth, forehead, eyelids, growing dewy-warm
With kisses balmier than half-opening buds
Of April, and could hear the lips that kiss'd
Whispering I knew not what of wild and sweet,
Like that strange song I heard Apollo sing,
While Ilion like a mist rose into towers.

Yet hold me not for ever in thine East;
How can my nature longer mix with thine?
Coldly thy rosy shadows bathe me, cold
Are all thy lights, and cold my wrinkled feet
Upon thy glimmering thresholds, when the steam
Floats up from those dim fields about the homes
Of happy men that have the power to die,
And grassy barrows of the happier dead.
Release me, and restore me to the ground.
Thou seest all things, thou wilt see my grave;
Thou wilt renew thy beauty morn by morn,
I earth in earth forget these empty courts,
And thee returning on thy silver wheels.

This mingling of styles has proved more suited to the English language than the pure Hellenic, which Arnold could not long sustain without falling into the bareness and baldness which is a common effect of literally translated Greek. English poetry seems obliged to lean on figures of speech, for its lack of inflections puts probably insurmountable obstacles in the way of the stylistic heightening by antithetical, epigrammatic juxtaposition of words characteristic of the

highly inflected Greek. It was at the expense of this concision that Swinburne attained something of Hellenic rapidity and grace in *Atalanta in Calydon* (1865) by the use of trisyllabic rhythms; and it is in their Swinburnian diffuseness that the admirable translations of Gilbert Murray are least representative of Greek drama.

Arnold's broadening of the conception of Greek life and literature was continued more resolutely by Swinburne and by Robert Browning. Browning's taste was for those sides of the Hellenic genius which Arnold neglected: for the colloquial vocabulary and the grotesque Hercules episode of Euripides' *Alcestis*, of which he made a free version in *Balaustion's Adventure* (1871), for the audacious naturalism of Aristophanes (*Aristophanes' Apology*, 1875) and for the highly metaphorical, abrupt, obscure majesty of Aeschylus, whose *Agamemnon* he translated in 1877. It was at Browning's request that Arnold restored the full text of *Empedocles*, of which only the songs of Callicles had been reprinted, to the final edition of his poetry in 1867. The gods of Swinburne's *Atalanta in Calydon*, like those of Euripides, are cruel and remorseless; the lot of man is hard under their sway. Its great popularity began the dethronement from the British mind of the idea of "Greek cheerfulness."

In Germany this dethronement was to a great extent the result of Friedrich Nietzsche's essay, *The Birth of Tragedy* (1872). A philologist drawing upon the labors of generations of scholars, Nietzsche was also a writer of penetrating imagination and rhapsodic emotion. He probed deeper into Herder's intuition of the origin of the Greek drama in the Dionysian dithyramb by asking, What manner of god was Dionysus? As Hölderlin had seen, he was brother to Jesus in having taken on mortal flesh. He was also the god of communal revelry and intoxication. Nietzsche stressed the darker side of this mysterious and ambiguous deity. For he was the god of debauchery, of cruel rites of mutilation—the creation

of a primitive religious imagination which accounted thus for the terrible world in which man found himself, for the pain inseparable from excess of pleasure. It was impossible that the Greeks who worshipped so sinister a deity could have been a race of optimists. It was significant that above the gods they placed inexorable Fate. The world of the *Iliad*, its bare facts stripped of poetry, is frightful. Nietzsche concluded that it was to make life bearable that the Hellenic imagination had created the serene Olympians. Apollo, the god of poetry, was also the god of dreams. Dreams covered the nudity of existence. Gods in the likeness of men but without human weakness bolstered the emergent sense of human individuality, of human dignity. But the Greeks were healthy animals. Out of the very superfluity of health they would dash themselves upon the spikes of pain, would break in Dionysian revels the bonds of individuality which Apollonian art, in refuge from suffering, tried to preserve and delimit, would abandon themselves to the dark flux of things. Out of these contraries, out of the Dionysian and the Apollonian tendencies, Greek tragedy was born. To the dithyrambic chorus answered the Apollonian dialogue, in which the god Dionysus suffering the ills of incarnation was represented by the human hero summoning his fortitude to endure the blows of fate. Sophoclean serenity was a balance of tensions which included the ugly, the painful, and the dissonant. Winckelmann had told only half the truth. The Greeks were tortured like ourselves. Of smiling Hellas only the climate smiled.

As Nietzsche wrote, Schliemann was digging at the site of Troy. Archeologists, whom his discoveries obliged to take up spades instead of spinning theories in their studies, have since made of the Trojan war only one of innumerable struggles for a vantage point dominating the trade route of the Dardanelles. Statues and temple ornament bearing traces of gaudy coloring have shattered the myth of the cool white purity of Greek plastic art. Side by side with a far fuller picture of

antique art and economics has grown a more intimate understanding of the Hellenic mind through exploration of its dark recesses. To those who read its literature, especially the drama with its liturgical source, in the original, survivals of primitive totem and taboo leap out of the page and arouse wonder that they could ever have been disregarded. The serene home of freedom and beauty which was the inspiration and the longing of Winckelmann, Schiller, Hölderlin, and Goethe, of Keats, Leopardi, and Leconte de Lisle, has yielded to a Greece of very solid reality. But this Greece of our fuller and deeper acquaintance has not inspired great poetry. The reason may lie in Leopardi's observation: "Few can be great, and in the arts and in poetry perhaps none, if not dominated by illusions."

Chapter Five

NATURE

GIACOMO LEOPARDI, menaced with blindness, prisoner in an uncongenial family, unable to accept the consolations of Christianity, felt the miracle of Italian spring stirring a heart which his mind had long endeavored to reconcile to despair. "A few evenings ago, before going to bed," he wrote Giordani in March, 1820, "on opening the window of my room I saw a clear sky with a beautiful moon. The air was soft and dogs bayed in the distance. There awoke in me antique imaginings, and I seemed to feel my heart moved. I began to cry out like a madman, begging nature for pity. After some time, I seemed to hear her voice." Never again did Leopardi hear that compassionate voice. In the poem "Alla primavera" (To Spring, 1822; 1824) which grew from recollection of this desperate effort to escape from isolation, the poet after the antique fashion calls to nature thrice: "Are you alive?" As he awaits a response, the pagan world in which his imagination is steeped arises before him; a world not wholly of joy as Schiller had conceived it, yet filled with objects, places, and creatures that were the abodes of spirits human and divine whom suffering had made sympathetic with man's lot—Daphne in her laurel, Echo, and Philomela the nightingale with her melodious tale of wrong. Into this vision breaks the remembrance that the nightingale is now only a bird, whose dolorous song arises from no human sorrow. Olympus is

empty and Earth indifferent to her children. The poet repeats his question to nature in diminishing terms that anticipate her silence. Abandoning hope for sympathy, he implores her, radiant in her spring attire, at least to listen and to observe man's afflictions:

Tu le cure infelici e i fati indegni
 Tu de' mortali ascolta,
 Vaga natura, e la favilla antica
 Rendi allo spirto mio; se tu pur vivi,
 E se de' nostri affanni
 Cosa veruna in ciel, se nell' aprica
 Terra s'alberga o nell'equoreo seno,
 Pietosa no, ma spettatrice almeno.

To the woes and the unworthy fates
 Of mortals, give ear,
 Lovely nature; restore to my spirit
 The antique spark; if indeed you live,
 If to our anguish
 Something there be in the sky, the sunny earth,
 Or the embrace of ocean,
 Compassionate, no, but at least seeing.

Alla primavera was Leopardi's ultimate plea. In the year after its publication he composed the prose essay *Frammento apocrifo di Stratone da Lampsaco* as a profession of faith in a mechanical universe of dead matter, existing from eternity to eternity through the perpetual formation and destruction of worlds. Laplace had assembled seemingly culminating evidence in his *Mécanique céleste* (1799; 1825). Assent did violence to the poet's deepest instincts, but seemed the only course open to intellectual honesty.

While the twenty-two-year-old Leopardi was beseeching nature for pity, Goethe, at seventy, was replying to a physicist's declaration,

Ins innre der Natur
 Dringt kein erschaffner Geist,

Into the core of nature
No mind created penetrates,

by a serene "Of course" ("Allerdings," 1820). There was no need to press within; Goethe was already in nature. For him, the dualism of spirit and matter, of God and the universe, maintained by orthodox Christian and by Cartesian alike, had ceased to have meaning. In a magnificent prose hymn to nature, which he wrote about 1782 but never published, he had accepted her with all her contradictions:

Nature! We are surrounded and enclosed by her—incapable of stepping outside her, and incapable of coming deeper into her. Unbidden and without warning she takes us up in the round of her dance and rushes along with us, until we are exhausted and fall from her arms. . . .

She seems to have planned all things for individuality, yet has no care for individuals. She ever builds and ever destroys, and her workshop is inaccessible. . . .

She has thought and continually she meditates; yet not as a man, but as nature. . . .

She makes her creatures out of nothing, and does not tell them whence they came or whither they go. They are only to run; the path *she* knows. . . .

She is everything. She rewards herself and punishes herself, delights and tortures herself. She is harsh and gentle, lovely and terrible, impotent and all-powerful. . . .

She has placed me here; she will also lead me hence. I trust myself to her. She may do with me as she likes. She will not hate her handiwork.

To the mechanistic analogy of Holbach's *Système de la nature*, "gloomy, . . . Cimmerian, . . . death-like," he opposed a rival analogy of organism for the interpretation of the universe. His faith in the unity of all life had led him to brilliant discoveries, including vestigial organs in man and the composition of the skull of vertebrates from the union of four originally distinct vertebrae, which supported his theories of the development of species and of the close relationship of

man to the animals. The late poem "Eins und Alles" (One and All, 1821; 1823) recommends as a source of abiding satisfaction man's yielding himself willingly to the eternal process of transformation. Thus Goethe found himself spiritually and physically at home in the world.

Leopardi's surrender was impossible, Goethe's terms were too low, for those who insisted on finding in nature something to fill the void left by the retreat of religion before the sciences. Christianity had done much to satisfy the instinct to give human likeness to the world, the instinct that had wider sway in pagan nature myths and in the animism of the savage. Impersonal natural law without a lawgiver was a bleak and difficult conception for minds which the teleology of Aristotelian science and the World-Soul of Plato as well as Christian theology had accustomed to read purpose, design, and character into the cosmos. Even a God who, after ordaining laws of nature, had retired to watch their operation, was too remote in his Heaven, especially for those whom the polite reserve of good society or the competitive atomism of the new economic order cut off from intimacy with their fellow men. Close at hand lay nature in her beauty and grandeur. The breeze caressed; the opening flower spread delight; the mountain uplifted the mind. Was not nature, direct from the hand of God without human alteration, divine? Must she not possess what made man akin to God, a spirit, a soul?

To those who in intolerable loneliness reached out for closer and wider fellowship with nature, philosophy and the newer sciences gave ample encouragement. That God was diffused throughout the world and in man was the tenet of a long line of thinkers from Plato to the eighteenth-century Bishop Berkeley. Friedrich von Schelling's *On the World-Soul* (1798) could summon the support of chemical, electrical, and magnetic discoveries of the closing years of the eighteenth century which pointed to a world more in human likeness than the Newtonian. Galvani's finding of electric

force in animal and human organisms and Volta's complementary investigations into galvanic phenomena had encouraged Mesmer to see in animal magnetism a *fluidum universale*. Schelling, observing the need for "a new mythology," maintained in *Ideas toward a Philosophy of Nature* (1797) that nature was "visible spirit" and spirit "invisible nature"; that there was "absolute identity of the spirit in us and in the nature outside us."

Schelling's approach to the "new mythology" was intellectual. That of his friends Hölderlin and Friedrich von Hardenberg (Novalis) was mystical. Prepared by a childhood that preferred the companionship of nature to playmates and by a youth entranced with the Greek myths, Hölderlin lost himself in the "Soul of Nature" as "streams after long wandering yearn into the ocean." Novalis interpreted nature in terms of Christian symbolism. *Hymns to the Night* tell how with the vanishing of belief in the pagan deities "Nature stood lone and lifeless" until revived by the birth of the Christ child. His unfinished romance of mingled prose and verse, *Heinrich von Ofterdingen* (1802), prepares a mediaeval youth to be a poet by stages of initiation into the mystic import of nature.

In the earlier verse of their English contemporary Wordsworth, the religious impulse was blended with a naturalism resembling Goethe's. The physical joys of the untrammelled wanderings of his schooldays among mountains and lakes prompted a primitive animism which made him feel there was "a spirit in the woods." Scientific studies at Cambridge, where Newton had held a chair of mathematics, left this feeling largely undisturbed. For the University taught the original doctrine of Newton, who had seen in the symmetrical arrangement and movements of the heavenly bodies the designing mind of God, and had been sure that the first cause of the universe was "not mechanical." But in revolutionary France, Wordsworth met the doctrines of the *philosophes* who had

dissociated Newtonianism from Christianity. It was probably then that he read Holbach, who stated emphatically: "When I say that nature produces an effect, I have no intention of personifying this 'nature,' which is an abstract entity." On his return to England, he became a disciple of Godwin, whose *Political Justice* put man and nature under the sway of an impersonal necessity. When insoluble difficulties of reconstructing society on Godwin's basis of pure reason drove him to yield up "moral questions in despair," it was in

mathematics, and their clear
And solid evidence

that Wordsworth sought refuge. But flight into abstractions brought its own discomfort and peril. In divorcing him from the concrete world it threatened to wither away his poetry, which was rooted in the senses. From this torturing dilemma, his sister Dorothy rescued him. By drawing him back to the pleasures of a simple life close to the earth, she made him once more "a creative soul." In thankfulness for this restoration arose the nature poetry of *Lyrical Ballads*, reconciling Wordsworth's aesthetic, scientific, and religious needs.

Sweet is the lore which Nature brings;
Our meddling intellect
Misshapes the beauteous forms of things:—
We murder to dissect

implied no summary rejection of the analytic method so fruitful of physical discoveries. But it was a protest against its exclusive use, which, as Wordsworth explained later in *The Excursion*, left

all objects unremittingly
In disconnection dead and spiritless

without the organic relationships that give them significance—a conception familiar today in the pages of Bergson and Professor Whitehead. For his

faith that every flower
Enjoys the air it breathes

he had support in the botanical speculations of the *Zoönomia* (1794-1796) of Dr. Erasmus Darwin, grandfather of the great Victorian. But it was the religious instinct that prompted the leap from belief in the sentience of nature to

a sense sublime
Of something far more deeply interfused,
Whose dwelling is the light of setting suns,
And the round ocean and the living air,
And the blue sky, and in the mind of man;
A motion and a spirit, that impels
All thinking things, all objects of all thought,
And rolls through all things.

Such exalted utterance, however, avoids the name of God. Completely naturalistic is the vision in the 1800 edition of *Lyrical Ballads* of the lot of the human individual after death:

No motion has she now, no force;
She neither hears nor sees;
Rolled round in earth's diurnal course,
With rocks, and stones, and trees.

Only after the death of his brother John in 1805 did Wordsworth's verse take on distinctly Christian coloring.

No poet has more convincingly portrayed man as a child of the earth or shown the means of deriving health and spiritual sustenance from it. The power of natural beauty to nurture beauty in humanity is entrancingly described in "Three years she grew in sun and shower" (1800). Nature's merciful provision for protecting the very young and the very old from the shock of bereavement is the theme of "We are Seven" (1798) and of the less-known but more felicitous "Old Man Travelling" of the same year:

The little hedgerow birds,
That peck along the roads, regard him not.

He travels on, and in his face, his step,
 His gait, is one expression; every limb,
 His look and bending figure, all bespeak
 A man who does not move with pain, but moves
 With thought.—He is insensibly subdued
 To settled quiet: he is one by whom
 All effort seems forgotten, one to whom
 Long patience has such mild composure given,
 That patience now doth seem a thing of which
 He hath no need. He is by nature led
 To peace so perfect, that the young behold
 With envy, what the old man hardly feels.
 —I asked him whither he was bound, and what
 The object of his journey; he replied
 “Sir! I am going many miles to take
 A last leave of my son, a mariner,
 Who from a sea-fight has been brought to Falmouth,
 And there is dying in a hospital.”

To open the way for such beneficent influence, Wordsworth urged that intellectual probing was not the sole means of acquiring knowledge:

Nor less I deem that there are Powers
 Which of themselves our minds impress;
 That we can feed this mind of ours
 In a wise passiveness.

This inculcation of “wise passiveness,” an inference from Locke’s doctrine of the receptivity of the mind to sensations, may be traced from Wordsworth to Keats’s early sonnet “What the Thrush Said” (1817) and to Shelley’s *Alastor* (1816) with its

poet’s blood
 That ever beat in mystic sympathy
 With Nature’s ebb and flow.

Wordsworth’s *Prelude* (1795; 1850) gives this theme of the development of a poet’s powers primarily through the influence of nature its subtlest and fullest treatment in world

literature. Incidents such as the poet's boyish terror at a mountain manifestly striding in pursuit as he rows guiltily away from its foot in a stolen skiff illustrate the molding of character

By the impressive discipline of fear,
By pleasure and repeated happiness.

In "Memorial Verses" on the occasion of Wordsworth's death in 1850, Matthew Arnold recorded what he had meant to his contemporaries:

He found us when the age had bound
Our souls in its benumbing round;
He spoke, and loos'd our heart in tears.
He laid us as we lay at birth
On the cool flowery lap of earth;
Smiles broke from us, and we had ease.
The hills were around us, and the breeze
Went o'er the sun-lit fields again:
Our foreheads felt the wind and rain.
Our youth return'd: for there was shed
On spirits that had long been dead,
Spirits dried up and closely furl'd,
The freshness of the early world.

Wordsworth's "healing power" was potent against the withering touch of rationalism, social artificiality, and commercialism. None of the chief English poets of his time failed to feel that power. Association with Wordsworth made the bookish Coleridge regret his London youth ("Frost at Midnight," 1798) and inspired him to such rapt utterances as

So my friend
Struck with deep joy may stand, as I have stood,
Silent with swimming sense; yea, gazing round
On the wide landscape, gaze till all doth seem
Less gross than bodily; and of such hues
As veil the Almighty Spirit, when yet he makes
Spirits perceive his presence,

which are scarcely distinguishable from the early Wordsworth's except for their theological tinge. The invocation to Nature introductory to Shelley's *Alastor*, which does Wordsworth the honor of twice quoting him, testifies to his strengthening of the mystical strain that assorted so strangely with Shelley's admiration of the *philosophes*. Wordsworth blends with Plato in Shelley's exalted description of the fate of Keats:

He is made one with Nature; there is heard
His voice in all her music, from the moan
Of thunder to the song of night's sweet bird;
He is a presence to be felt and known
In darkness and in light, from herb and stone,
Spreading itself where'er that Power may move
Which has withdrawn his being to its own;
Which wields the world with never-wearied love,
Sustains it from beneath, and kindles it above.

After *Adonais*, union with Nature is offered as a consolation in the chief English elegies, replacing the Christian Heaven of *Lycidas* completely in Arnold's *Thyrsis* and Swinburne's *Ave atque Vale* and blending with it in Tennyson's *In Memoriam*.

Shelley's images from nature, like those of Coleridge, differ from Wordsworth's in their almost unearthly vividness and splendor. Peculiarly Shelleyan is an imaginative penetration into the intimate world of each object, the cloud and the mountain, the lizard and the sensitive plant, to interpret its characteristic joys and sorrows: the wind's

Driving sweet buds like flocks to feed on air,

and

The desire of the moth for the star.

Shelley turned Byron from ridicule of Wordsworth to respect for his poetry of nature. The Prisoner of Chillon is aroused from hebetation in his solitary dungeon by "the carol of a bird"; and Wordsworthian "quiet of a loving eye" leads

to "friendship" with such unprepossessing creatures as spiders and mice. In the cult of nature the anti-clerical Byron found a substitute for Christian orthodoxy:

Are not the mountains, waves and skies a part
Of me and of my soul, as I of them?

. . . .

My altars are the Mountains and the Ocean,
Earth,—air,—stars, all that spring from the Great Whole
Who hath produced and will receive the Soul.

By 1817, enthusiasm for nature had become so rooted in English verse that Keats, with the sweeping assertion of immaturity, could upbraid the poets of the previous century for insensitivity:

Ah, dismal-soul'd!

The winds of heaven blew, the ocean roll'd
Its gathering waves—ye felt it not. The blue
Bared its eternal bosom, and the dew
Of summer nights collected still to make
The morning precious: beauty was awake!
Why were ye not awake? But ye were dead
To things ye knew not of,—were closely wed
To musty laws lined out with wretched rule
And compass vile: so that ye taught a school
Of dolts to smooth, inlay, and clip, and fit,
Till, like the certain wands of Jacob's wit,
Their verses tallied. Easy was the task:
A thousand handicraftsmen wore the mask
Of Poesy. Ill-fated, impious race!
That blasphemed the bright Lyrist to his face,
And did not know it,—no, they went about,
Holding a poor, decrepid standard out,
Mark'd with most flimsy mottoes, and in large
The name of one Boileau!

Three years later, Boileau's standard was being pulled down in his native France. Lamartine sought in nature consolation for bereavement:

Mais la nature est là qui t'invite et qui t'aime;
Plonge-toi dans son sein qu'elle t'ouvre toujours.

But nature is there who invites and loves you;
Plunge into her arms that are always outspread.

In "Le Lac" (The Lake, 1820), which set a fashion in love verse that was followed by Hugo's "Tristesse d'Olympio" (1840) and Musset's "Souvenir" (1841), his desire to make eternal a moment of happiness finds its only satisfaction in the hope that the lake and the hills that are its witnesses will retain its memory when the mortal lovers are no more. In his younger contemporary Victor Hugo, the humanization of nature reaches its fullest development in France. Hugo largely escaped the usual French education. After following his father to garrison posts abroad, he returned to Paris at the age of ten to browse among books under the indulgent guidance of his mother and an aged priest. In the charmingly informal "Ce qui se passait aux Feuillantines vers 1813," he rejoiced that his chief instruction had come from the garden of his home—one of those oases of trees, shrubbery, and flowers which still surprise with their size and beauty the inquisitive glance through a chance-opened gate in a monotonous Parisian street. Like Shelley, Hugo sensed the flavor and mood of every natural object, though his line,

La nature est un drame avec des personnages,

Nature is a drama with characters,

betrays the theatricality of some of his interpretations. In certain poems, such as "Oui, je suis le rêveur" (1856), the desire for companionship partially defeats itself by drawing nature so far into the human sphere as to destroy the flavor of strangeness which quickens and widens the imagination. Although Hugo and Lamartine chant the glory of the Creator manifest in his creation, French poets are incapable of the mystical self-surrender that is a peculiar glory of German and English verse of their epoch:

that serene and blessed mood,
 In which the affections gently lead us on,—
 Until, the breath of this corporeal frame
 And even the motion of our human blood
 Almost suspended, we are laid asleep
 In body, and become a living soul:
 While with an eye made quiet by the power
 Of harmony, and the deep power of joy,
 We see into the life of things.

In the fate of the poet in *Alastor*, Shelley felt it needful to sound a warning against delight in nature to the exclusion of human sympathy. Wordsworth, though writing chiefly of solitary characters and detesting the artificialities and corruptions of urban life, loved mankind and bore the burden of anxiety as to its doubtful fate. But Byron, stung by his ostracism in 1816, proclaimed his preference of nature to his fellow men:

I can see
 Nothing to loathe in Nature, save to be
 A link reluctant in a fleshly chain,
 Classed among creatures, when the soul can flee,
 And with the sky—the peak—the heaving plain
 Of ocean, or the stars, mingle—and not in vain.

He rejoiced in

the feeling infinite, so felt
 In solitude, where we are *least* alone.

A few months after penning these lines in the Third Canto of *Childe Harold*, he had Manfred confess to the Witch of the Alps:

From my youth upwards
 My spirit walked not with the souls of men,
 Nor looked upon the earth with human eyes.

When his wounds were not so fresh, in the final canto of *Childe Harold* he could qualify:

I love not man the less, but nature more
From these our interviews,

but his misanthropic use of nature was too striking to be forgotten. It had irresistible attraction for young poets of humiliated France after the fall of Napoleon. Mildly melancholy in Lamartine, it became full voiced in Hugo's "Au vallon de Chérizy" (1822):

Isolés comme lui, mais plus que lui tranquilles,
Arbres, gazons, rians asiles,
Sauvez ce malheureux du regard des humains!
Ruisseaux, livrez vos bords, ouvrez vos flots dociles
À ses pieds qu'a souillés la fange de leurs villes,
Et la poudre de leurs chemins!

Isolated like him, but more tranquil than he,
Trees, grass, ye smiling refuges,
Save this wretch from the gaze of men!
Rills, open your banks, open your docile waves
To feet soiled by the mud of their cities
And the dust of their roads!

In maturity, Hugo returned to the theme in the musical and impressive "Aux arbres" (To Trees, 1856), an apology for his career as a poet and as a man:

Arbres de la forêt, vous connaissez mon âme!
Au gré des envieux, la foule loue et blame;
Vous me connaissez, vous!—Vous m'avez vu souvent,
Seul dans vos profondeurs, regardant et rêvant.

. . . .

Attentif à vos bruits qui parlent tous un peu,
Arbres, vous m'avez vu fuir l'homme et chercher Dieu!

Trees of the forest, you comprehend my soul!
At the whim of the envious, the crowd praises and blames;
It is you who know me, you who have often seen
Me gazing and musing alone in your hidden depths.

. . . .

Attentive to those sounds of yours which all have their speech,
You have seen me flee from man and seek out God!

Likewise Leconte de Lisle, in fierce revulsion against his countrymen for their submission to Napoleon III:

Oui! le Mal éternel est dans sa plénitude!
L'air du siècle est mauvais aux esprits ulcérés.
Salut, Oubli du monde et de la multitude!
Reprends-nous, ô Nature, entre tes bras sacrés!

Yea, eternal Wrong is in its plenitude!
Frail souls the foul air of the era harms.
Hail, Oblivion of the world and of the multitude!
Take us back, Nature, back in thy sacred arms!

Nature was "sacred." It had perfection to which man, fallen from Eden or from some other state of primitive harmony with his environment, could not pretend. This was the common faith of Deists like Rousseau, atheists like Holbach, and orthodox Christians like Cowper. In the eighteenth century, "nature" and "natural" were words to conjure with. The French Physiocrats and Adam Smith invoked in the economic realm the benefits of the "natural order" which Pope's *Essay on Man* found throughout the universe. Deists derived from the behavior of Creation a "natural religion" beside which the Bible was a faulty revelation. Science, the social sciences, and theology in their several spheres pronounced nature a visible standard for the guidance of man. Two years before the death of Pope, Edward Young declared:

Nature is Christian; preaches to mankind,
And bids dead matter aid us in our creed.

Sermons in stones were of course no novelty, but the subsequent era, in which writers embraced the belief that there was no "dead" matter, was especially prolific of them. Shelley saw in Mont Blanc a majestic rebuke to man's inhumanity to man:

Thou hast a voice, great mountain, to repeal
Large codes of fraud and woe.

Liberty, abandoned by the French people, survived for Coleridge as

The guide of homeless winds, and playmate of the waves.

Wrung with pity at the degradation of four beggar boys,
Hugo looked upward,

Et son œil ne vit rien que l'éther calme et chaud,
Le soleil bienveillant, l'air plein d'ailes dorées,
Et la sérénité des voûtes azurées,
Et le bonheur, les rires, les cris triomphants
Que des oiseaux de ciel tombaient sur ces enfants.

And his eyes saw naught but the sky calm and warm,
The benignant sun, the air full of golden wings,
And the serenity of the vaulted blue
Whence came the happy calls, the exultant laughter
That fell from the birds of the sky upon these children.

Most insistent of all upon the contrast of "Nature's holy plan" with "what man has made of man" was Wordsworth. The sceptical have triumphed over him too easily by quoting the extravagant

One impulse from the vernal wood
May teach you more of man,
Of moral evil and of good,
Than all the sages can,

which in its context is clearly friendly banter, just as the refusal of nature to flourish about Hart Leap Well in requital of cruelty to the hart is avowedly folk superstition. Yet there can hardly be question that the general purport of Wordsworth's verse is to present nature as the ideal not only of beauty but of goodness. Vibrant with sincerity is his gratitude to her for the shaping of his character:

Yet were I grossly destitute of all
Those human sentiments that make this earth
So dear, if I should fail with grateful voice
To speak of you, ye mountains, and ye lakes
And sounding cataracts, ye mists and winds

That dwell among the hills where I was born.
If in my youth I have been pure in heart,
If, mingling with the world, I am content
With my own modest pleasures, and have lived
With God and Nature communing, removed
From little enmities and low desires—
The gift is yours; if in these times of fear,
This melancholy waste of hopes o'erthrown,
If, 'mid indifference and apathy,
And wicked exultation when good men
On every side fall off, we know not how,
To selfishness, disguised in gentle names
Of peace and quiet and domestic love
Yet mingled not unwillingly with sneers
On visionary minds; if, in this time
Of dereliction and dismay, I yet
Despair not of our nature, but retain
A more than Roman confidence, a faith
That fails not, in all sorrow my support,
The blessing of my life—the gift is yours,
Ye winds and sounding cataracts! 'tis yours,
Ye mountains! thine, O Nature! Thou hast fed
My lofty speculations; and in thee,
For this uneasy heart of ours, I find
A never-failing principle of joy
And purest passion.

Nowhere has he a moment of misgiving comparable to
Goethe's in "Das Göttliche" (1781; 1785):

Denn unfühlend
Ist die Natur;
Es leuchtet die Sonne
Über Bö's und Gute,
Und dem Verbrecher
Glänzen wie dem Besten
Der Mond und die Sterne.

For unfeeling
Is nature;
The sun shines
On evil and good;

Alike for the wrong-doer
And for the righteous
Gleam moon and stars.

Those to whom Goethe's utterance is a truism or an understatement should not yield to the temptation of taxing at least three generations of poets with blindness or self-deception. Aldous Huxley's essay, "Wordsworth in the Tropics," suggests by the implied anomaly of its title a key to the enigma. For the poets most convinced that nature is a moral guide had been observing her ways in the temperate zone of fortunately situated Europe and in long-settled communities that had tamed her to a high degree. Even Wordsworth had an inkling of the limited applicability of his nature worship when in "Ruth" (1800) the burning sun and fierce wilds of pioneer American Georgia disintegrate the character of an English immigrant. The first emphatic negation of nature's benevolence in poetry came logically from a native of semi-tropical Italy.

From the windows of his ancestral palace, Leopardi watched descend upon Recanati the severe autumnal storms of 1829. His "La quiete dopo la tempesta" opens like a Wordsworthian idyll with description of the peace and rejoicing as a storm clears away and permits the townsfolk to resume their out-of-door occupations. Remembering how for hours they had cowered within, pale and silent before the menace of lightning and wind, Leopardi asks himself: When is life sweet and pleasant? When does man least remember his misfortunes? With the irony that is a characteristic charm of Italian verse, he comes to a very un-Wordsworthian conclusion:

O natura cortese,
Son questi i doni tuoi,
Questi i diletti sono
Che tu porgi ai mortali. Uscir di pena
È diletto fra noi.
Pene tu spargi a larga mano; il duolo

Spontaneo sorge: e di piacer, quel tanto
 Che per mostro e miracolo talvolta
 Nasce d'affanno, è gran guadagno. Umana
 Prole cara agli eterni! assai felice
 Se respirar si lice
 D'alcun dolor; beata
 Se te d'ogni dolor morte risana.

O courteous nature,
 These are your gifts,
 These the delights you offer unto mortals.
 Escape from pain is our delight.
 Pains you scatter with free hand; sorrow
 Spontaneous rises; and that trifle of pleasure
 Which as a marvel and miracle sometimes
 Springs from anguish,
 Is great gain. Human
 Race dear to the immortals! Quite happy
 If pain lets us breathe, and blessed
 If death cures all our ills at once.

Leopardi's resentment of nature's insidious trickery grew to rage when a few years later he discovered that he had himself been her dupe through blind following of the sexual instinct. He had believed that the wife of a Florentine professor loved him in spite of his misshapen body, until on his declaring his passion she had burst into laughter. In a few lines of contending violence and resignation intended for his eyes only ("A se stesso," wr. 1833), he assailed

la natura, il brutto
 Poter che, ascoso, a commun danno impera.

nature, the brutal
 Power that, hidden, rules to the ruin of all.

Immediately after this crowning disillusionment, Leopardi left central Italy permanently for Naples, where signs of nature's ferocity are stamped unmistakably on the landscape dominated by Vesuvius. While living high on the mountain side to escape summer heat, he composed a poem with a dis-

arming title: "La ginestra; il fiore del deserto" (The Broom; the Flower of Waste Places). Beginning with praise of the brave yellow flower that, highest of plant life, climbs the arid lava cone crowned by the crater, his verses swiftly and subtly pass to recollection of the Roman villas and cities destroyed below: proof of how much kindly nature cares for the human race:

Quanto è il gener nostro in cura
Dell'amante natura.

Not far beneath the lonely region of the broom flower lie vineyards planted on more weathered lava flows by peasants forced by poverty to live in ceaseless anxiety beneath the crater's smoke wreath and menacing rumble. Seized with pity for his blind, misguided race, the poet bids men strive no more against their fellows but unite to combat the real author of their woes: nature, their mother in birth but their stepmother in intention:

Madre in parte ed in voler matrigna.

What began like a Wordsworthian lesson from a flower has become a challenge to optimistic naturalism.

In his early "Inno ai patriarchi," written a few months after "Alla primavera" in the same mood of longing for the harmony of primitive peoples with nature, Leopardi had envied the Hebrew patriarchs their sight of a world freshly created and unaltered by the hand of man. In anticipation of a privilege similar to theirs, the thirty-two-year-old Nikolaus Lenau sailed from Bremen for America in 1832. A believer in Schelling's doctrine of the spiritual unity of man and nature, he was eager to commune with her in virgin forests. After a difficult journey into the interior, he found what he sought near New Harmony, Ohio. But the realized dream was disillusioning. Instead of fresh green, he saw withered and deformed branches fighting fiercely upward for sunlight. "Der Urwald" (The Primitive Forest, 1836) records Lenau's horror

at the struggle of vegetation for existence, the stifling of life by "rotting stems, withered fingers of death" (durch Moderstämme, dürre Todesfinger). The aristocrat on his uncleared farm in Crawford County, Ohio, shod in mid-winter with dancing pumps, grasping an axe in kid gloves and desisting after a few feeble strokes, typifies the gap between poetic primitivism and primitive reality. Lenau accepted what forest and ocean taught. Describing in "Der Schiffsjunge" (The Cabin Boy, 1834) an incident of his discouraged return to Europe, the drowning of a boy fallen overboard in a stiff wind, he remarked on the indifference of the waves:

Klar blickt der alte Mörder Ocean
Dem Himmel zu, als hätte er nichts gethan.

Serenely, old murderer Ocean looked up
To heaven, as if he had done nothing.

Thereafter the unconcern of nature for man became a settled conviction of Lenau's steadily gloomier verse. Nowhere has it found more beautiful expression than in the opening lines of his sonnet "Einsamkeit" (Loneliness, 1840):

Der Wind ist fremd, du kannst ihn nicht umfassen,
Der Stein ist tot, du wirst beim kalten, derben
Umsonst um eine Trosteskunde werben,
So fühlst du auch bei Rosen dich verlassen;
Bald siehst du sie, dein ungewahr, erblassen,
Beschäftigt nur mit ihrem eignen Sterben.

The wind is a stranger whom you cannot embrace,
Stone is dead, from such cold solid things
Vainly you seek to win consoling knowledge;
With roses, too, you feel yourself abandoned;
For unaware of you they soon grow pale,
Busied with the thought of their own dying.

With the eighteen-forties, accounts of primitive nature and of primitive man by scientifically trained travelers began increasingly to modify the preconception of stay-at-home Eu-

ropean poets. Alfred de Vigny's consultation of such books for "La Sauvage" (1843), a defense of Puritan civilization in America against sentimental preference for Indians and virgin forest, colored his view of nature in a far finer poem, "La Maison du berger" (The Shepherd's Hut, 1844). "La Maison du berger" opens with a Byronic plea for flight from cities to solitude. The silence and peace of the heath are welcome after the speed of the new railways and the overdevelopment of commerce under Louis-Philippe; but Vigny knows they would at length be intolerable without human companionship:

Ne me laisse jamais seul avec la Nature,
Car je la connais trop pour n'en par avoir peur.
Never leave me alone with Nature,
For I know her too well not to hold her in dread.

He seems to hear Nature say:

Je suis l'impassible theatre
Que ne peut remuer le pied de ses acteurs;
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.
Je n'entends ni vos cris ni vos soupirs; à peine
Je sens passer sur moi la comédie humaine
Qui cherche en vain au ciel ses muets spectateurs.
Je roule avec dédain, sans voir et sans entendre,
À coté des fourmis les populations;
Je ne distingue pas leur terrier de leur cendre,
J'ignore en les portant les noms des nations.
On me dit une mère et je suis une tombe.
Mon hiver prend vos morts comme son hécatombe,
Mon printemps ne sent pas vos adorations.

I am the impassive theatre
Which the footsteps of its actors cannot shake;

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.
I hear not your cries nor your sighing; I scarcely feel
Pass over me the human comedy
Which vainly seeks in the skies for mute spectators.

Without eyes or ears, disdainfully
 I bear men and ants alike in my revolutions;
 Alike to me are their clay and their ashes,
 I know not even the names of the nations I carry.
 They call me their mother and I am only their tomb.
 My winter takes your dead as its sacrifice,
 My spring is unmindful of your adoration.

Vigny replies:

Vivez, froide Nature, et revivez sans cesse
 Sous nos pieds, sur nos fronts, puisque c'est votre loi;
 Vivez, et dedaignez, si vous êtes déesse,
 L'Homme, humble passager, qui dût vous être un Roi;
 Plus que tout votre règne et que ses splendeurs vaines
 J'aime la majesté des souffrances humaines:
 Vous ne recevrez pas un cri d'amour de moi.

Cold Nature, live and revive, since such
 Is your law, above and below us ceaselessly.
 Live, and disdain, if you are goddess indeed,
 Man, the humble transient, who should be your King.
 More than the empty splendor of your reign
 I revere the majesty of human sufferings:
 Never will you have a cry of love from me.

The similarity to Leopardi's "La ginestra" in the turn toward humanity and in the line,

On me dit une mère et je suis une tombe,

which seems to echo

Madre in parte ed in voler matrigna

is striking. Imitation, however, was impossible, since "La ginestra" remained in manuscript until 1845, a year after the publication of "La Maison du berger" in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*.

But it is almost certain that Vigny's poem came under the eyes of a constant reader of *La Revue des Deux Mondes*, Matthew Arnold. In Arnold's first volume of verse (1849) ap-

peared a sonnet "To an Independent Preacher Who Preached That We Should be 'in Harmony with Nature'":

'In harmony with Nature'? Restless fool,
 Who with such heat dost preach what were to thee,
 When true, the last impossibility;
 To be like Nature strong, like Nature cool:—
 Know, man hath all which Nature hath, but more.
 And in that *more* lie all his hopes of good.
 Nature is cruel; man is sick of blood:
 Nature is stubborn; man would fain adore:
 Nature is fickle; man hath need of rest:
 Nature forgives no debt, and fears no grave;
 Man would be mild, and with safe conscience blest.
 Man must begin, know this, where Nature ends;
 Nature and man can never be fast friends.
 Fool, if thou canst not pass her, rest her slave!

It is ironical that this, the first vigorous repudiation in English verse of nature as a moral guide, should have come from an admiring friend of Wordsworth, who since childhood had passed his summers in sight of the aged poet's home in the Lake country. The vehemence of Arnold's tone, like that of Vigny and Leopardi, comes of disappointed love for nature. In a calmer mood, he was aware that the cruelty of nature was as baseless an anthropomorphism/as her benevolence. She was merely neutral:

Nature, with equal mind,
 Sees all her sons at play;
 Sees man control the wind,
 The wind sweep man away;
 Allows the proudly riding and the foundered bark.

Arnold never ceased to search for some intellectually respectable means of unsaying even this. Like Leopardi, he could not shake off sadness over a world bare of nature myths.

The background of science implicit in Arnold: the evidence of the recently maturing sciences of geology and biology which was to converge in *The Origin of Species*, was explicit in Ten-

nyson. Darwin's work was still nine years away when *In Memoriam* was published, but Tennyson was aware of the threat to the purposiveness and benevolence of nature contained in such books as Lyell's *Principles of Geology* (1830 ff.) and the anonymous *Vestiges of Creation* (1844). *In Memoriam* (1850) is the finest artistic record of the anguish of those who believed orthodox Christianity could be reconciled with science, when the natural sciences repudiated anthropomorphic and anthropocentric interpretations of the behavior of nature. In blank despair at the sudden loss of his friend Hallam, Tennyson is told by Sorrow that he lives in a universe of automatic mechanism:

The stars, she whispers, blindly run,
A web is woven across the sky.

But the full terror of his isolation and bereavement is impressed upon him later by sciences closer to man, which describe the fate, not of stars and "the dying sun," but of organic life. Man's dreams of a beneficent universe:

O, yet we trust . . .
That nothing walks with aimless feet;
That not one life shall be destroy'd,
Or cast as rubbish to the void,
When God hath made the pile complete;
That not a worm is cloven in vain;
That not a moth with vain desire
Is shrivell'd in a fruitless fire,
Or but subserves another's gain,

are denied by biology's report of the wanton wastefulness of Nature:

So careful of the type she seems,
So careless of the single life
 . . . that of fifty seeds
She often brings but one to bear.

The fossil record is even more alarming:

'So careful of the type?' but no.
 From scarped cliff and quarried stone
 She cries, 'A thousand types are gone;
 I care for nothing, all shall go.

'Thou makest thine appeal to me.
 I bring to life, I bring to death;
 The spirit does but mean the breath:
 I know no more.'

As those menaced by sudden death are said to relive their lives in a flash, so Tennyson the religious and ethical strivings of the human race, which nature menaces with futility and extinction:

And he, shall he,

Man, her last work, who seem'd so fair,
 Such splendid purpose in his eyes,
 Who roll'd the psalm to wintry skies,
 Who built him fanes of fruitless prayer,

Who trusted God was love indeed
 And love Creation's final law—
 Tho' Nature, red in tooth and claw
 With ravine, shriek'd against his creed—

Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
 Who battled for the True, the Just,
 Be blown about the desert dust,
 Or seal'd within the iron hills?

No more? A monster then, a dream,
 A discord. Dragons of the prime,
 That tare each other in their slime,
 Were mellow music match'd with him.

Tennyson retained faith in these strivings through a supernatural warrant felt within his heart, but he could discover no warrant in natural religion:

I found Him not in world or sun,
Or eagle's wing, or insect's eye.

As if unwilling to survive the passing of the myth of Nature from the temple he had built for it in English poetry, Wordsworth died in the year of *In Memoriam*, the year following the apostasy of Matthew Arnold.



Did Darwin throw poetry back upon a world as alien as that of mechanistic physics? Was man's search for a friend or mentor behind phenomena delusive and vain, and its sole legacy entrancing and noble but baseless dreams illustrating Schiller's paradox that

Was unsterblich im Gesang soll leben
Muss im Leben untergehn

What is to live immortally in song
In life must perish?

No. Man's cry for companionship was not unanswered, though the reply did not come in the form desired. He sought spiritual fellowship. In the search he rediscovered his physical and psychological kinship with the animals, with plants, with the material world. Goethe's insights pointed toward Darwin. It was easier to accept simian cousinship when poets had already accustomed the imagination to associate not only with animals and birds but also with trees and mountains. The search for spiritual qualities in nature resulted in the finding of natural qualities in humanity. Man is indubitably nature's child, even if she be not intent on his welfare; most modern psychologies, whether physiological or Freudian, are expansions of this idea. Arnold's "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens" (1852) were probably the first of innumerable grateful tributes to the physical and spiritual refreshment of a city park:

Calm soul of all things! make it mine
To feel, amid the city's jar,

That there abides a peace of thine,
Man did not make, and cannot mar!

Release, sharpening, and quickening of the senses came from delight in nature. The subtlety and richness of color in Coleridge, Keats, Hugo, and Heine, the alertness to sound of Goethe, Coleridge, Foscolo, Shelley, Lamartine, and Hugo restored to poetry what the eighteenth century had resigned to opera and to interiors. Appeals to the so-called lower senses, by Keats to taste, by Baudelaire to odor and touch, were a widening of its resources. Paradoxically, in view of their reputation for sensuousness, Italians did not exploit all the senses until D'Annunzio (1863-1938). The recall into the poetic domain of the ugly and the horrible, of all that strikes the senses sharply, begun by Pope, was accelerated by Keats's "Isabella" and Shelley's "Sensitive Plant," and reached its fullness in Baudelaire. The grotesque juxtaposition of ugliness and beauty, of the delightful and the disgusting, for mutual enhancement, successful in Byron's *Don Juan*, was further developed by Heine, Leopardi, Hugo, Browning, and Baudelaire. A by-product of the refining and exploiting of the senses was the notable enrichment of the language of poetry after starvation on abstractions.

Familiar scenes observed with sensitivity gave rise to a poetry of locality and local color, to which nationalism often added fervor. The lakes of Cumberland and Westmorland lent their name to a school of poets who made Skiddaw and Helvellyn almost as well known as Mont Blanc. Unforgettable are Hölderlin's Heidelberg, Leopardi's Recanati, the southern France of Leconte de Lisle's "Midi," Tennyson's Lincolnshire marshes and the Hungarian heaths of Lenau's *Heidebilder*. Carducci's powers reach their height in passionate love for suave Umbria with its rich historical associations ("Alle fonti del Clitumno," 1875; "Canto dell'amore," 1876). The moon that shines on Leopardi's hill town between mountains and sea:

Dolce e chiara è la notte e senza vento,
 E queta sovra i tetti e in mezzo agli orti
 Posa la luna, e di lontan rivela
 Serena ogni montagna

Soft and clear is the night and windless
 And quiet over the roofs and on the gardens
 Lies the moon, and from afar revealeth
 Serene every mountain

is as distinctly Mediterranean as the moon is Northern that
 pierces the mist of the valley beside Goethe's garden house:

Füllest wieder Busch und Tal
 Still mit Nebelglanz.

Again thou fillest brake and vale
 Quiet with misty gleam.

Spring in the English cathedral town of Keats's "Saint Mark's
 Eve" suggests Constable:

The city streets were clean and fair
 From wholesome drench of April rains;
 And, on the western window panes,
 The chilly sunset faintly told
 Of unmatured green valleys cold,
 Of the green thorny bloomless hedge,
 Of rivers new with spring-tide sedge,
 Of primroses by shelter'd rills,
 And daisies on the aguish hills

just as Hugo's

Il contemplait longtemps les formes magnifiques
 Que prend la nature dans les champs pacifiques
 Long he gazed on the magnificent forms
 That nature assumes in peaceful fields

recalls Nicolas Poussin.

Nature was not stripped wholly of moral significance. If
 her ways were found not entirely good, some were still
 worthy of imitation. If she were unconscious of human mor-

als, she was fruitful of instructive analogies, even for those who repudiated any transcendental interpretation of her.

One lesson, Nature, let me learn of thee,

. . . .

Of Toil unsevered from Tranquillity,

wrote Arnold at the same time as "To an Independent Preacher." In the way a hunted wolf met death ("La Mort du loup," 1843), Alfred de Vigny found a reproach of human weakness and an occasion for superb enunciation of his Stoic creed. The broom flower was to Leopardi a mute rebuke to overweening pride. Lenau drew encouragement from the immemorial spectacle of autumn ("Waldlieder," IX):

Rings ein Verstummen, ein Entfärben:
Wie sanft den Wald die Lüfte streicheln,
Sein welkes Laub ihn abzuschmeicheln;
Ich liebe dieses milde Sterben.
Von hinnen geht die stille Reise,
Die Zeit der Liebe ist verklungen,
Die Vögel haben ausgesungen,
Und dürre Blätter sinken leise.
Die Vögel zogen nach dem Süden,
Aus dem Verfall des Laubes tauchen
Die Nester, die nicht Schutz mehr brauchen,
Die Blätter fallen stets, die müden.
In dieses Waldes leisem Rauschen
Ist mir, als hör' ich Kunde wehen,
Dass alles Sterben und Vergehen
Nur heimlich still vergnügtes Tauschen.

All about is stilling, paling,
How soft the breezes stroke the woodland,
To flatter off its withered foliage;
I love this mild, easy dying.
Hence departs the quiet journey,
The knell of days of love has sounded,
Birds are weary of their singing,
And dry leaves are falling softly.
The birds have vanished to the southland,

From bare branches now are peeping
 Nests that have no need of shelter,
 Leaves keep falling, falling, weary.
 In this woodland's quiet rustling
 I seem to hear a message blowing,
 That all dying and departing
 Is only quiet pleasant changing.

Reflection on the similitudes and contrasts of nature and man led to abundant artistic triumphs, of which Blake's "Ah, Sunflower, Weary of Time" is among the most memorable. To be counted among them are certain even of Wordsworth's obtrusively didactic analogies, such as "The Small Celandine" (1807) with its melancholy conclusion:

To be a Prodigal's Favorite—then, worse truth,
 A Miser's Pensioner—behold our lot!
 O, Man, that from thy fair and shining youth
 Age might but take the things Youth needed not!

The contrast perhaps most iterated, and seldom without impressiveness, is that of the eternal renewal of nature and the doubtful fate of the human individual which has been common property of poets at least since the early Greeks. Lamartine stated it baldly as a title: "Éternité de la nature; brièveté de l'homme." More subtly it is the theme of Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale," and is applied to Keats's own fate in *Adonais*. Nowhere has it been presented with graver beauty than by Hugo in "Soleils couchants," VI (Sunsets, VI, 1831):

Le soleil s'est couché ce soir dans les nuées,
 Demain viendra l'orage, et le soir, et la nuit;
 Puis l'aube, et ses clartés de vapeurs obstruées,
 Puis les nuits, puis les jours, pas du temps qui s'enfuit.
 Tous ces jours passeront; ils passeront en foule
 Sur la face des mers, sur la face des monts,
 Sur les fleuves d'argent, sur les forêts où roule
 Comme un hymne confus des morts que nous aimons.
 Et la face des eaux, et le front des montagnes,
 Ridés et non vieillis, et les bois toujours verts

S'iront rajeunissant; le fleuve des campagnes
 Prendra sans cesse aux monts le flot qu'il donne aux mers.
 Mais moi, sous chaque jour courbant plus bas ma tête,
 Je passe, et, refroidi sous ce soleil joyeux,
 Je m'en irai bientôt, au milieu de la fête,
 Sans que rien ne manque au monde immense et radieux.

Tonight the sun has set in a sky of clouds,
 Tomorrow a storm will come, and evening, and night,
 Then the dawn, clear of clogging mists,
 Then nights and days, the steps of flying time.
 All these days will pass, will pass in throngs
 Over the face of the sea, the face of the mountains,
 Over silvery rivers, over forests where stir,
 Like a hymn indistinct, the dead whom we love.
 And the face of the waters, the brow of the mountains,
 Wrinkled, not aged, and forests ever green
 Will go on renewing their youth; from mountains ever
 Rivers will take their waters down through fields to the sea.
 But I, bowing lower my head to the weight of each day,
 I pass, and soon, chill beneath this sun,
 I shall depart in the midst of the festival
 And not be missed from the radiant universe.

Such contrasts and analogies were in Wordsworth's mind when he concluded his "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality" with:

Thanks to the human heart by which we live,
 Thanks to its tenderness, its joys and fears,
 To me the meanest flower that blows can give
 Thoughts that do often lie too deep for tears.

From poetry of nature for man's sake grew insensibly poetry for nature's sake, in which the poet lost himself in the object. Two early instances are of the same year, 1820: Shelley's "Cloud," a miracle of sympathetic imagination, and Keats's "To Autumn," a perfect reading of the season's mood. Hugo's delightful "Nuits de Juin" (June Nights, 1840) is still slightly tinged by the observer:

L'été, lorsque le jour a fui, de fleurs couverte
 La plaine verse au loin un parfum enivrant;
 Les yeux fermés, l'oreille aux rumeurs entr'ouverte,
 On ne dort qu'à demi d'un sommeil transparent.

Les astres sont plus purs, l'ombre paraît meilleure;
 Un vague demi-jour teint le dôme éternel;
 Et l'aube douce et pâle, en attendant son heure,
 Semble toute la nuit errer au bas du ciel.

In summer, when the day has fled, the flowering plain
 Pours intoxicating fragrance wide;
 Eyes closed, ears dimly aware of sounds,
 One only half slumbers a transparent sleep.

The stars are purer, the dark seems lovelier;
 A vague twilight never melts away,
 And dawn soft and pale, awaiting its hour,
 Seems to wander all night at the base of the sky.

Leconte de Lisle sometimes detaches himself completely, as in *Paysage polaire* (1862).

Though the Latin peoples are considered indifferent or callous to animals, their poets excel in interpreting them. Nothing in the contemporary German or English verse approaches Leconte de Lisle's "Les Éléphants" (1855) or Carducci's "Il bove" (The Ox, 1873). Beside the former's "Le Sommeil du condor" (The Condor's Sleep) Tennyson's "The Eagle" is merely externally observed.

Leconte de Lisle's objectivity was consciously imitative of natural science; so too the meticulous accuracy in observation on which Tennyson prided himself. A poetry of nature that had risen in revolt against physics found itself much more sympathetic to the methods of natural history. When geology and biology, drawing upon widening exploration, arrived at conclusions negating cherished hopes, Tennyson, though sorely troubled, could not brush them aside. Leconte de Lisle and Arnold bowed the head and recommended resignation in a

world to whose comprehension man's desires were obviously not the key.

In the twentieth century, when poets were becoming contented with half a loaf, physics, hitherto unyielding, granted much more. In an Einsteinian universe, matter is a derivative of motion. The "living nature" of Goethe and Wordsworth is coterminous with this universe, in which matter and thought are alike waves of energy. Man once more, as in antiquity, is at home in a world no longer alien to his mind. He has learned from poets and psychologists to save himself from the atrophies and overintellectualization of city life by return to nature for a rejuvenation without need of Faust's caldron. Poets have made him aware of an infinitude of beauty in her moods, even in her ferocity and ugliness. Through them, "the common face of Nature" still speaks to the senses and the spirit "rememberable things."

Chapter Six

WONDER

THE MYSTERIOUS UNIVERSE" would scarcely have been ventured by an eighteenth-century scientist as a title for his speculations. For the leaders of thought then held the inspiring faith that nothing was impenetrable by the human mind. And they had ground for their faith in the rapid pushing back of the boundaries of ignorance by the amazing seventeenth-century discoveries of Kepler, Galileo, Descartes, Pascal, Huygens, Boyle, Leibnitz, and Newton, to which the new century was adding the mechanics of Lagrange and Laplace, the chemistry of Lavoisier and Priestley, and the social sciences founded by Montesquieu, Rousseau, Adam Smith, Beccaria, and Bentham. The infinitely remote and the infinitely small were being penetrated by the telescope and the microscope. It seemed that neither the outer world of nature nor the inner world of human nature could long withhold secrets from genius armed at length with the proper methods of investigation and the highly refined tools of the new mathematics.

Before advancing knowledge were fleeing fears and superstitions which had cramped and enslaved humanity. The burning of witches ceased; astrology and the divine right of kings no longer had weight with superior minds. Medicine was being cleared of magic and quackery. Free inquiry was dissipating moral taboos. Belief in the uniformity of nature,

confirmed steadily by experimental results, ignored the sceptical conclusion of Hume's investigation of causation, and steadily undermined the rival Christian faith in the miraculous. From Locke's *Reasonableness of Christianity* (1695) it was an easy step to Toland's *Christianity Not Mysteriorious* (1696), typical of a Deism which put its God permanently in the skies after His creation of the world-machine. The sun's standing still at Ajalon and the primitive magical accretions of the Scriptures that interest modern anthropologists were marks for Voltaire's wit. Atheists like Holbach could join with the Deist Voltaire in his enthusiastic tribute to "La Loi naturelle" (Natural Law, 1756), which freed human affairs from the arbitrary interference of a capricious deity conceived in the likeness of an Oriental despot. The hitherto unimagined vastness of the universe of the telescope and the microscope did not increase awe, but rather gave unwonted self-confidence to the intellectual classes. They now had power over the forces of nature without recourse to supernatural aid, and considered the human mind the measure of all things. They felt comfortable in a world whose order and stability were not menaced by the unpredictable. Release of psychological tension is apparent in the assertions of Holbach: "There can be neither monsters, nor wonders, nor marvels, nor miracles in nature. . . . What we call wonders, marvels, supernatural effects are phenomena of nature of which our ignorance does not permit us to know the principles or manner of action. . . . The universe, that vast assemblage of all that exists, everywhere offers us nothing but matter and motion." Ease in a wholly explicable universe fitted perfectly with the poised *nil admirari* of an urbane society that raised eyebrows at "enthusiasm."

But this security was confined to a very small part of the population. The astonishing triumphs of science since 1400, when Europe had known less of fact than the ancient Greeks,

had been the work of a few bold and resourceful thinkers and had not spread beyond the aristocracy and the intellectuals of the middle class. It was only with the nineteenth century that applied science in the forms of the steamboat, the railroad, the telegraph, factory machinery, and modern medicine began to make the masses mechanically minded and familiar with the rational control of nature. Almost entirely illiterate, the lower classes of the eighteenth century were scarcely less a prey to superstition than in the Middle Ages; and an aristocratic society was in no hurry to enlighten them.

In this spread between the world-views of the few and the many, poets found a fertile field for artistic exploitation. They understood the pre-scientific mentality far better than writers today, for their childhood had been spent with servants whose belief in spirits and magic was unshaken and boundless, and their own religious training often made faith in invariable natural law seem an oppugning of God's omnipotence and providence. Alone at night in solitary spots, they felt their spines shiver as they glanced about apprehensively. They knew that in many who laughed at monkish and peasant superstitions in crowded, brilliantly lighted drawing rooms, skillful verse could awake primitive fears. Seriously as artists and as men they resented the impoverishment of the imagination, the emotions, and the senses involved in the new interpretations of the universe. The steady shrinking of the unseen and the unknown reduced the space free for fancy to people with the strange, the monstrous, the beautiful. Comfort and order were being purchased dearly with the loss of the unexpected and the thrilling. With the disappearance of guardian angels and the personal Devil, at whose head Luther had hurled an inkstand, the moral struggle lost picturesque drama. The scientifically "real" nature made up of Locke's primary qualities, colorless, soundless, odorless, was dull and insipid, and formulae of matter and motion were absurdly inadequate

to account for the majesty of mountains, the terror of lightning, and the quickening of spring. In a society suffering from an excess of dry, white light, poetry summoned its resources to reassert neglected values, and to recall the concrete realities of full human experience.



In the spring of 1773, the young lawyer G. A. Bürger heard a German peasant girl singing a snatch of verse:

Der Mond, der scheint so helle,
Die Toten reiten schnelle.

The moon, it shines so bright,
The dead ride fast at night.

From this hint he built up, with the aid of Percy's *Reliques*, a ballad relating the punishment of a young woman who blasphemously rejects religious consolation for the loss of her lover in one of Frederick the Great's wars. The return of the lover's ghost to take her for a wild gallop through the night to a bridal bed in a graveyard is made impressive by skillful use of the devices of folk poetry: refrain, repetition, internal rhyme, onomatopoeia, superstitious paraphernalia and atmospheric suggestion. The poetic value of the ballad "Lenore" is not high, but the workmanship is admirable; swift, well proportioned, it dwells upon horrors just long enough. Audaciously, Bürger had chosen an almost contemporary setting in the reign of the still-living scoffer and friend of Voltaire. "Lenore," appearing in 1774 when Goethe's only published treatment of the weird was a gypsy scene in the prose *Götz*, had great popularity in Germany and England, where it set a vogue for ballads of the supernatural. It was admired by Goethe, whose "Fischer" (1778) and "Erlkönig" (1782) were far subtler, and translated by Walter Scott, whose ballads scarcely surpassed it. Backward Germany, teeming with legends scarcely disturbed by sophisticated incredulity, offered

its poets unfailing abundance of material. But after the "Erlkönig" the German ballad shows no artistic advance, though it received highly competent treatment in the hands of Schiller, Uhland, and Heine.

In England, however, the ballad attained superlative development through Coleridge, who induced "willing suspension of disbelief" throughout a poem far longer than any of Goethe's successes in the *genre*. "The Rime of the Ancient Mariner" (1798) is typically English in drawing upon the superstitions of seafarers and explorers. Its eclectic supernatural machinery, Christian, Jewish, Neoplatonic, acquires peculiar power from the poet's intense perception of the exotic scenery with which it is associated, from the ice pack to the rotting tropical seas in which the remorseful mariner meets the terrors of immeasurable solitude. Nature, alive, colored, horrible, menacing, magnificent, belies the abstractions to which the contemporary physics had reduced it. A superb musician, Coleridge draws from the ballad stanza unsuspected variety and melody. The vocabulary, archaic like that of "Es war ein König im Thule," completes the impression of strange and remote beauty and terror. Beyond "The Ancient Mariner" lay but one variety of perfection in the type, the union of the utmost imaginative and musical suggestion with the utmost reticence and concision in Keats's "La Belle Dame sans Merci" (1820).

In face of the popularization of science in the nineteenth century, poets shrank from the increasing difficulty of creating an illusion of the supernatural. Tennyson's "Lady of Shalott" (1833) and Arnold's "Forsaken Merman" (1849) are humanly tragic rather than strange. Yet genuine magic reappeared belatedly in 1862 with the "Goblin Market" of the mystic Christina Rossetti.

Ballads of folk superstition were distinctive Northern art. Emulation by poets of Latin countries, though frequent, produced nothing notable.



It was the East, the cradle of the human race, the mother of religions, which stirred the imagination of the French with the immemorially primitive. The Bible was their magical book. Unlike the Protestant English and Germans, who had been Bible readers since the sixteenth century, they had come to it late. Boileau's warning of poets away from the Christian supernatural had suited the Laodiceanism of the following century. But the antireligious excesses of the Revolution revived a piety that could distinguish between the grandeur of Christianity and the frailty of ecclesiastics who had brought it into disrepute. Poets born near the turn of the century read Chateaubriand's *Génie du christianisme* (1802), which revealed the glories of the Bible as literature. Undulled by familiarity, its Oriental poetry was to the French what Shakespeare had been to the Germans, the irradiation of a dry and formal literature with freedom, naturalness, and splendor. Chateaubriand's defense of the Christian marvelous, pointing to its triumphant use in *The Divine Comedy* and *Paradise Lost*, shook their confidence in the exclusive merit of their national literature. In the nineteenth century, French verse became cosmopolitan in a new sense, not imposing its taste on other nations, but drawing sustenance from the remote and the unfamiliar.

The Bible carried in his soldier's sack from garrison to garrison was the chief inspiration of Alfred de Vigny's "Éloa: a Mystery" (1824), which relates the seduction of an angel by Satan, whom she loves from pity. The name Éloa came from Klopstock's *Messias* by way of Chateaubriand. The poem is also indebted to Milton, Tom Moore, and, more remotely through the motto which Byron prefixed to his *Heaven and Earth*,

And woman wailing for her demon lover,

to the most enchanting of English Oriental poems, Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" (1797; 1816). The intriguing whisper of Vigny's Satan:

Je suis le Roi secret des secrètes amours,

I am the secret King of secret loves,

gives a foretaste of Baudelaire. No poets of the century can equal Leconte de Lisle and Hugo in feeling for the harsh, savage beauty and terrors of the freshly created Earth through which Adam and his family walked when cast out of Eden. The unforgettable close of Hugo's "Les Malheureux" (The Unfortunates, 1856) is outdone by the former's "Quaïn" (1869), in which the poet's imagination was assisted by objects of Assyrian art newly exhibited in the Louvre. Byron's *Cain* (1821) is an unsubstantial sketch beside the sinister superman created by Leconte de Lisle, and by Hugo in "La Conscience" (1859). With crude colors Leconte de Lisle prepares the scene for his appearance:

C'était un soir des temps mystérieux du monde,
Alors que du midi jusqu'au septentrion
Toute vigueur grondait en pleine éruption,
L'arbre, le roc, la fleur, l'homme et la bête immonde,
Et que Dieu haletait dans sa création.

C'était un soir des temps. Par monceaux, les nuées,
Émergeant de la cuve ardente de la mer,
Tantôt, comme des blocs d'airain, pendaient dans l'air;
Tantôt, d'un tourbillon véhément remuées,
Hurlantes, s'écroulaient en un immense éclair.

Vers le couchant rayé d'écarlate, un œil louche
Et rouge s'enfonçait dans les écumes d'or,
Tandis qu'à l'orient, l'âpre Gelboé-hor,
De la racine au faite éclatant et farouche,
Flambait, bûcher funèbre où le sang coule encor.

Et loin, plus loin, là-bas, le sable aux dunes noires,
Plein du cri des chacals et du renâchement

De l'onagre, et parfois traversé brusquement
Par quelque monstre épais qui grinçait des mâchoires
Et laissait après lui comme un ébranlement.

Mais derrière le haut Gelboé-hor, chargées
D'un livide brouillard chaud des fauves odeurs
Que répandent les ours et les lions grondeurs,
Ainsi que font les mers par les vents outragées,
On entendait râler de vagues profondeurs.

It was an eve in those mysterious days,
When throughout the length and breadth of Earth
Pristine vigor roared in full eruption,
Trees, rocks, flowers, man and the unclean beast;
And the Creator panted in his creation.

It was an eve in those days. Clouds in heaps
Emerging from the caldron of the sea,
Sometimes hung in air, like sheets of bronze,
Sometimes, by whirlwinds buffeted about,
Roaring, rent the sky with a great flash.

In the west striped with scarlet, a leering eye
Was plunging red into the golden foam of waves,
While in the east the rude Gelboé-hor
Was all aflame from base to savage peak,
A funeral pyre down which the blood still ran.

And far, far off, dark dunes of shifting sand,
Full of the cries of jackals and the snorts
Of the wild ass, and roughly shot across
By some bulky monster gnashing his teeth
And leaving a void behind like an avalanche.

But beyond the high Gelboé-hor,
Swathed in hot thick mists of savage scent
By bears and roaring lions shed abroad,
Sounded, like seas whipt by tempestuous winds,
Death-rattles rising out of unknown depths.

French interest in the East as a land of magic and barbaric
sumptuousness was promoted by imperial expansion. Memories
of Napoleon's ill-fated expedition to the Nile and Palestine
were still fresh when the French subjugated Algeria (1830-

1840). The return of color and drama to French painting in the canvases of Delacroix had its counterpart in Hugo's *Les Orientales*, likewise topically related to the struggle of the Greeks against the Turks, and colored by childish memories of the Spanish Moors. Hugo's evocation of the terror of an Arab populace at the nearing of a band of evil spirits ("Les Djinns," 1829) is the most impressive bit of diablerie in his language. The crescendo and diminuendo of emotion at the approach, the arrival, and the passing of the demons is represented for the eye and the ear by corresponding variation of verses from two to eleven syllables, with a sure artistry that rivals similar effects in the music of Debussy's *Fêtes*. The Orient played a large part in rescuing French verse from bareness and opening it to all the senses. Eastern luxury, often summoned to his squalid hotel rooms by opium and hasheesh, gives rich languor to Baudelaire's "La Vie intérieure," "La Chevelure," and "L'Invitation au voyage." A Sultaness and her setting offer Leconte de Lisle in "La Vérandah" (1869) the opportunity for onomatopoeic effects comparable in their self-conscious elaboration to the lyrics in Tennyson's *Princess*. The French have been more receptive than other nations to the indigenous civilizations of their colonies. Their successful rivals in India had done little with the poetic possibilities of Hindu mythology when Leconte de Lisle, himself of colonial birth, gave it a large place in his *Poèmes antiques* (1852). To the East, nevertheless, English poetry owes one of its chief glories, "Kubla Khan," the gift of an opium dream.



Accessible to all nations without barriers of geography or social class were the lingering enchantments of the Middle Ages. Yet of the innumerable poems they evoked, few satisfy Coleridge's difficult test of inducing "willing suspension of disbelief," though those which do are among the foremost productions of the era. Preëminent and earliest is *Faust*. The

title role embodies the mediaeval spirit of striving into the infinite. Voices of spirits diabolic and angelic, spells, incantations, Christian hymns, and a walled Gothic town with outlying meadows where a mysterious poodle circles ever nearer in the twilight—quicken and maintain illusion. Goethe's only rival is Coleridge in the far briefer "Christabel" (1797-1800; 1816), the source of the most delicate effects in English mediaevalism. The uncanniness of Lady Geraldine dawns upon the reader slowly through increasingly explicit hints. Her charm muttered over the unprotected Christabel will stand comparison for flexibility with the Song of Spirits that by lulling Faust asleep wins Mephistopheles release from the imprisoning pentagram, and with the alternate song of Faust, Mephistopheles, and the Will-o'-the-Wisp as they float through the air to the Walpurgis Night revels. To the resources of Goethe's thaumaturgy, Coleridge adds prophetic dream symbolism and the evil eye. He is fuller in atmospheric description, in details of the gloomy Northern forest and the castle interior with rush-strewn floor and curious carvings.

After Goethe and Coleridge, atmosphere is more often effective in arousing wonder than incident, rich description than suggestion. In Keats's "Eve of Saint Agnes" (1820) and unfinished "Saint Mark's Eve," the supernatural is kept in the background; the mediaeval enchantment lies in rich and strange appeals to all the senses, the thrills are in the menace of human malignancy. In certain portions of *La Légende des siècles*, such as "Eviradnus," Hugo exhibits prodigious virtuosity in creating mediaeval atmosphere sinister and sumptuous for human figures unfortunately mere puppets of exaggerated good and evil.



The reaction from the *philosophes* and the French Revolution produced fervent Christian poetry, notably the "Hymnen an die Nacht" (Hymns to the Night, 1800) of Novalis, the

Inni sacri (Sacred Hymns, 1815-1822) of Manzoni, the *Méditations poétiques* (1820) of Lamartine, the *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* (1822) of Wordsworth and "L'Espoir en Dieu" (Hope in God, 1838) of Musset. Novalis' hymns are among the most appealing examples of German mysticism: in them, a child-like ingenuousness and purity linger in an adult mind. A nature capable of infinite affection, early bereft in love and shrinking from the garish light of a harsh and indifferent world, finds healing in the night, symbol of emancipating death. Death, the lurking dread of paganism, the terror of a world dominated by materialistic science, through the suffering and risen Christ has become a source of bounding joy. For in the extremity of grief there appeared to the poet a waking dream that momentarily burst the bonds of matter and time and gave a foretaste of a world of spirit in which his need of love would have unending satisfaction. Nothing could be farther from the contemporary French verse at the close of the eighteenth century than these *Hymns to the Night*, with their fluctuation between rhymed verse and rhythmic prose, their shunning of clear outlines, their other-worldliness, their apprehension of symbols with sensuous literalness. Transparent simplicity and haunting cadences continue in Novalis' *Geistliche Lieder* (Sacred Songs, 1802), with his brief prayer to the Virgin:

Ich sehe dich in tausend Bildern,
Maria, lieblich ausgedrückt,
Doch keins von allen kann dich schildern,
Wie meine Seele dich erblickt.

Ich weiss nur, dass der Welt Getümmel
Seitdem mir wie ein Traum verweht,
Und ein unnennbar süsser Himmel
Mir ewig im Gemüte steht.

I see thee in a thousand pictures,
Mary, portrayed with love,
Yet none of them can draw thee,
As my soul has seen thee above.

I know only, the world's turmoil
 Since has flown like a dream in the wind,
 And unspeakably sweet heaven
 Dwells ever in my mind.

A like joy at release from the sceptical atmosphere of Parisian salons, to which the renown of his grandfather, the *philosophe* Beccaria, gave him entrance in his formative years, radiates from Manzoni, restoring freshness to well-worn themes of Italian devotional verse: the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, and Pentecost.

In France this untroubled lyricism was not yet possible; Voltaireanism had worked too well. Lamartine's "La Foi" (Faith) is the debate of a believing heart with a sceptical head, and "L'Homme" (Man), dedicated to Byron in hope of his conversion, admits the intractability of the problem of evil. The spoiled Parisian dandy Musset, after having cursed Voltaire in *Rolla* (1833) as the cause of incurable moral anarchy, in "L'Espoir en Dieu" (1838) avows reluctantly:

Malgré moi, l'infini me tourmente.

Against my will, infinity torments me.

The English recoil from the Revolution gradually involved Wordsworth. From his generally uninspired *Ecclesiastical Sonnets* stands out "Inside of King's College Chapel," the most beautiful interpretation in English verse of the mystery of Gothic architecture:

Give all thou canst; high Heaven rejects the lore
 Of nicely calculated less or more;
 So deemed the man who fashioned for the sense
 These lofty pillars, spread that branching roof
 Self-poised, and scooped into the thousand cells,
 Where light and shade repose, where music dwells
 Linger— and wandering on as loth to die;
 Like thoughts whose very sweetness yieldeth proof
 That they were born for immortality.

After 1830, Englishmen reared in this atmosphere of revived orthodoxy felt pressure from the developing sciences of geology and biology, and from critical Biblical scholarship seeping in from Germany. Tennyson was torn by an internal debate more anguishing than Lamartine's. In "The Two Voices" (1842) the "dark voice" tempting to suicide demolishes successive gallant defenses of the immortality of the soul, and is driven off only by obstinate inarticulate faith. The onslaught of the natural sciences in *In Memoriam* is checked by a mystical experience like that of Novalis, coming as Tennyson reads the letters of his dead friend Hallam:

So word by word, and line by line,
The dead man touch'd me from the past,
And all at once it seemed at last
The living soul was flash'd on mine,

And mine in his was wound, and whirl'd
About empyreal heights of thought,
And came on that which is, and caught
The deep pulsations of the world,

Aeonian music measuring out
The steps of Time—the shocks of Chance—
The blows of Death.

The intellectualism of Robert Browning's more confident battlings with Biblical higher criticism and vulgar infidelity is shot through by moments of irresistible magic, such as the meeting with the risen Lazarus in "An Epistle of Karshish" (1855) and the disconcerting reply to the superficial sceptic in "Bishop Bloughram's Apology" (1855):

Just when we are safest, there's a sunset-touch,
A fancy from a flower-bell, some one's death,
A chorus-ending from Euripides,—
And that's enough for fifty hopes and fears
As old and new at once as nature's self,
To rap and knock and enter in our soul,
Take hands and dance there, a fantastic ring,

Round the ancient idol, on his base again,—
The grand Perhaps!



Persistence of the habit of seeing a dualism in all things caused the discovery of mystery in every-day life. This "natural supernaturalism," to borrow an apt term from Carlyle, is among the most characteristic expressions of the mentality of the era, and among the boldest achievements of its art. The dualism varies in degree from Faust's confident cry:

Der Geister Welt ist nicht verschlossen,
Dein Sinn ist zu, dein Herz ist tot!
Auf! Bade, Schüler, unverdrossen
Die irdsche Brust im Morgenrot!

The world of spirits is not closed,
Your mind is shut, your heart is dead!
Up! scholar, up! bathe unrestrained
Your earthly breast in morning red!

to its furthest attenuation in the materialist Leopardi:

To the sensitive and imaginative man who lives, as I for a long time have lived, continually in feeling and imagination, the world and its objects are in a certain manner double. He will see with his eyes a tower, a field, will hear with his ears a sound of a bell, and at the same time with the imagination will see another tower, another field, will hear another sound. In this second kind of objects lies all the beauty and pleasure of things. Wretched that life (and yet it is the life of most) that sees, hears, feels only simple objects, merely those perceptible to the ears, eyes and other senses.

With power to open unsuspected windows in the most ordinary objects and events, Wordsworth and Baudelaire were supremely gifted. Wordsworth gave thanks for

those obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Fallings from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a Creature
Moving about in worlds not realized.

To his ears, the "two-fold shout" of an invisible cuckoo made "the earth we pace" an "unsubstantial, faery place." The deep shade of four clustered giant yews, where "ghostly Shapes may meet at noontide," has "looks that threaten the profane." In the calm sunset sea at Calais

the mighty Being is awake,
And doth with his eternal motion make
A sound like thunder—everlastingly.

The arresting experience of meeting the blind on city streets has been interpreted by Baudelaire's mingling of relentless naturalism with transcendent suggestion:

Contemple-les, mon âme; ils sont vraiment affreux!
Pareils aux mannequins; vaguement ridicules;
Terribles, singuliers comme les somnambules;
Dardant on ne sait où leurs globes ténébreux.
Leurs yeux, d'où la divine étincelle est partie,
Comme s'ils regardaient au loin, restent levés
Au ciel; on ne les voit jamais vers les pavés
Pencher rêveusement leur tête appesantie.
Ils traversent ainsi le noir illimité,
Ce frère du silence éternel. O cité!
Pendant qu'autour de nous tu chantes, ris et beugles,
Éprise du plaisir jusqu'à l'atrocité,
Vois, je me traîne aussi! mais plus qu'eux hébété,
Je dis: Que cherchent-ils au Ciel, tous ces aveugles?

Observe them, my soul, they are truly frightful!
Like manikins; vaguely ridiculous;
Strange and terrible as somnambulists;
Darting one knows not where their darkened orbs.
Their eyes, from which the spark divine has fled,
As if they looked afar, are always raised
Up to the sky; never toward the pavement
Their heavy heads droop down in reverie.
They traverse thus the illimitable dark,
Brother of eternal silence. O city!
While all about us you sing, and laugh and roar,
Pursuing pleasure till it turns to pain,

Look, I too am maimed! but stupider
 Than they, I ask: What seek they in Heaven, all these blind?

Even without spiritual implications, the universe expanded immeasurably in space and time inspired awe in proportion to the power of the contemplating imagination. It overwhelmed Leopardi:

Sempre caro mi fu quest'ermo colle
 E questa siepe, che da tanta parte
 Dell'ultimo orizzonte il guardo esclude.
 Ma sedendo e mirando, interminati
 Spazi di là da quella, e sovrumani
 Silenzi, e profondissima quiete
 Io nel pensier mi fingo; ove da poco
 Il cor non si spaura. E come il vento
 Odo stormir tra queste piante, io quello
 Infinito silenzio a questa voce
 Vo comparando: e mi sovvien l'eterno
 E le morte stagioni, e la presente
 E viva, e il suon di lei. Così tra questa
 Immensità s'annega il pensier mio;
 E il naufragar m'è dolce in questo mare.

Dear to me always was this lonely hill
 And this high hedge, that on so many sides
 From the furthestmost horizon shuts the view.
 But as I sit and gaze, interminable
 Spaces still beyond, and superhuman
 Silences, and the profoundest quiet
 Invade my thought, until my heart almost
 Shrinks back in terror. And when I hear
 The wind sigh in these branches, I compare
 Its voice to that infinitude of silence:
 Musing on eternity, and the dumb
 Generations dead, and that alive
 And sounding in the present. So within
 This immensity my spirit drowns;
 And sweet to me is shipwreck in this sea.

The leap from the rustling wind to the sound of passing generations, and the image of shipwreck that conveys the re-

coil of the finite mind from the double infinitude are among the supreme manifestations of creative activity. Hugo's "La Pente de la Rêverie" ("The Declivity of Reverie," 1831) employs one hundred and fourteen lines to describe much less effectively "cette double mer du temps et de l'espace" (this double sea of time and space) which Leopardi's "L'infinito" (1825) evokes with fifteen. The nebula of Orion, seen through a telescope, humbled Tennyson:

A single misty star
Which is the second in a line of stars
That seem a sword beneath a belt of three,
I never gazed upon it but I dreamt
Of some vast charm concluded in that star
To make fame nothing.

From the import of the personal immortality ardently desired by Tennyson, Leconte de Lisle shrank, crying out to the author of *Ecclesiastes*, who had found earthly life vanity:

Vieil amant du soleil, qui gémissais ainsi,
L'irrévocable mort est un mensonge aussi.
Heureux qui d'un seul bond s'englouterait en elle!
Moi, toujours, à jamais, j'écoute, épouvanté,
Dans l'ivresse et l'horreur de l'immortalité,
Le long rugissement de la Vie éternelle.

Old lover of the sun, who thus groaned aloud,
Irrevocable death is an illusion, too.
Happy he who could plunge with one bound into it!
Always, forever, I listen, with deep dread,
Drunk with the horror of immortality,
To the long-drawn roar of eternal Life.

The secret of the power to

Crowd eternity into an hour
Or stretch an hour into eternity

was intensity of perception which poets had in full measure from Goethe to Rimbaud. They were intermediaries for the

regaining of the wonder of the world from the staleness of familiarity and from the blasé inattention of the "man of the world." They had the fresh impressionability of the child and the intentness of the solitary. Retiring from the social group to look within themselves and to meet the forces of nature, they knew the fascination and the humbling discipline of terror.

O Wedding-Guest! this soul hath been
Alone on a wide sea

is the impressive credential of the Ancient Mariner. In the "Eve of Saint Agnes" Porphyro steals from his hiding place

Noiseless as fear in a wide wilderness.

Fear, sought with joy, formed the youth of Wordsworth and Shelley. Shelley's visions can be almost unbearable:

As on the jag of a mountain crag
Which an earthquake rocks and swings,
An eagle alit one moment may sit
In the light of his golden wings.

He feels tension even in the solitude of night:

Solemn midnight's tingling silentness,

like Leconte de Lisle:

Ruisselle en nous, silence étincelant des cieux!
Stream into us, glittering silence of the skies!

Hugo delights in the exotic weirdness of Northern forests ("À Albert Durer") and sees men as

flocons de neige éternelles
Dans l'éternelle obscurité.

eternal snowflakes
In the eternal dark.

In "Bateau ivre" (Drunken Ship, 1871; 1883) Rimbaud rivals Coleridge in evoking the force, the horror, and the beauty of lonely seas.

In certain poets, intensity crosses the borders of the abnormal. The unearthly lights of Coleridge's imagination, so soon dimmed, owed an unassessable debt to laudanum taken to relieve neuralgia. Drugs offered Baudelaire a short-cut to an enlargement of consciousness:

L'opium aggrandit ce qui n'a pas de bornes,
Allonge l'illimité,
Approfondit le temps, creuse la volupté
Et de plaisirs noirs et mornes
Remplit l'âme au delà de sa capacité.

Opium magnifies the boundless,
Lengthens the limitless,
Deepens time and voluptuousness
And with pleasures black and dismal
Fills the soul beyond its capacity.

One can only speculate as to what part artificial stimulation played in *Les Fleurs du mal* and the stranger *Illuminations* of Rimbaud. There is the approach of madness in the hypersensitivity of the later odes of Hölderlin and in lyrics of Lenau such as "Einem Gemütskranken" (To One Diseased in Mind):

Seitdem du mit den höchsten Mächten
Begannst zu hadern und zu rechten,
Kann dir der kleinste, stillste Wurm
In Herzen wecken einen Sturm,
Wie einst in jenen Frühlingstagen,
Die dir kein Gott zurück mehr ruft,
Ein grünes Blatt, ein Hauch der Luft
Dir oft gebracht ein seliges Behagen.

Since you with the mighty gods
Began to bicker and be at odds,
Even the tiniest, stillest worm

Can waken in your heart a storm;
 As once in those past days of spring,
 That no god back to you will bring,
 A green leaf, the air's soft kiss,
 Often gave you heavenly bliss.



As the nineteenth century advanced, the atmosphere of science became more respirable for poets. While technology was transforming the world of the common man, the important ideas of the first three quarters of the century arose much less frequently from physics than from geology, chemistry, and biology. Poets were less pressed to defend life, growth, and concreteness. Stirred by the Baconian vision of the boons science could bestow on humanity, Shelley prophesied in 1817:

And Science and her sister Poesy
 Shall clothe in light the fields and cities of the free!

When Wordsworth was past sixty, his imagination kindled at the vision of Newton's

mind forever
 Voyaging on strange seas of Thought, alone.

Although Leopardi was saying

Il verde è spogliato delle cose
 The bloom has been rubbed off from things

almost simultaneously with Keats's despairing protest:

There was an awful rainbow once in heaven:
 We know her woof, her texture; she is given
 In the dull catalogue of common things,

Tennyson in the next generation, while troubled by its religious and ethical implications, did not find science inimical to beauty or stifling to the imagination. The "fairytale of

science" nourished the "youth sublime" of the forward-looking Victorian of "Locksley Hall" (1842). Even to the purposeless world he dreads in *In Memoriam* Tennyson does not deny beauty:

This round of green, this orb of flame,
Fantastic beauty; such as lurks
In some wild poet, when he works
Without a conscience or an aim.

"If hopes are dupes, fears may be liars." The analysis of the rainbow which alarmed Keats was obtained by a prismatic device such as later produced the spectrum analysis, with its amazing determination of the velocity, the direction of movement, and the chemical composition of the stars, which has made man more at home in a universe grander than he had suspected. Gradually men became aware that the scientific and the aesthetic interpretations of the world are not mutually exclusive; John Stuart Mill wrote in his *Autobiography* (1874): "The intensest feeling of the beauty of a cloud lighted by the setting sun is no hindrance to my knowing that the cloud is vapor of water, subject to all the laws of vapors in a state of suspension; and I am just as likely to allow for, and act on, these physical laws whenever there is occasion to do so, as if I had been incapable of perceiving any distinction between beauty and ugliness." With Clerk Maxwell's *Electricity and Magnetism* (1873), physics, which had provoked the hostility of three generations of poets, began what has become in the twentieth century a spectacular desertion of "common sense" notions. The profundity of Goethe's apothegm, "Man never knows how anthropomorphic he is," grows as we examine the presuppositions of scientists from the sixteenth through the nineteenth century in the light of recent discoveries which point to the probability that the universe is, in the words of the Cambridge biochemist J. B. S. Haldane, "not only queerer than we suppose, but queerer than we *can* suppose."

In the history of thought, the poetry of wonder appears as a revolt against the dogmatism of the over-confident youth of science. Among intellectual laymen it counteracted habits of abstraction and analysis as desiccating to the imagination as their offshoot, the "economic man" motivated solely by the pursuit of gain, was inimical to social welfare. The human mind had been bidden to find its model and its limits in a simple world-mechanism. Its protest is finding belated scientific justification in a world-view that is becoming as complex, as delicate, as unfathomable as the minds of the greatest poets. How necessary was the assertion of neglected human values for the happiness of highly organized personalities may be seen from such documents as the *Autobiography* of John Stuart Mill, to whom Wordsworth's verse restored joy in living. The shadow which "omnipotent matter" cast even upon the early twentieth century may be measured in Bertrand Russell's *A Free Man's Worship* (1903). Yet recently the philosopher C. E. M. Joad could declare that "science has cleared the boards for religion," though he was careful to add, "but it has no contribution to make to the writing of the play."

The present-day American, reared in an atmosphere of applied science and of scientific habits of thought, feels no impatient urge to write the play without the guidance of science. Largely detached from mediaeval traditions and living in a land where civilization has been almost coeval with the Industrial Revolution, he seldom has known fear before the powers of nature and before the specters of the mind. Thus he often needs to make an effort of historical imagination to become fully sympathetic with the poetry of folk superstition and of mystical religion. Yet he must be dull indeed if he does not respond to its beauty. Even if the necessity of revolt against the one-sidedness of science may prove to have been only temporary, the poetry it called forth will be an enduring

testimony to the glory of the universe and to the complexity of the human spirit. Its creators will be remembered as

a portion of the loveliness
Which once [they] made more lovely.

Loveliness not only in the light-world of space, but also in the world of time to which the ear gives access. For their verse learned to approximate music, which

pours on mortals
Its beautiful disdain,

not only by the melody of words but also by that silent suggestion which pipes "to the spirit ditties of no tune." Leopardi, with extraordinary understanding of his own creative processes, observed that "the words *far*, *ancient* and the like are most poetic and pleasing, because they awake ideas that are vast, indefinite, indeterminable, and confused." To such effects the English language, with its polyglot vocabulary, especially lends itself. Wordsworth has described the alchemy of language:

Visionary power
Attends the motions of the viewless winds,
Embodied in the mystery of words;
There, darkness makes abode, and all the host
Of shadowy things work endless changes,—there,
As in a mansion like their proper home
Even forms and substances are circumfused
By that transparent veil with light divine,
And, through the turnings intricate of verse,
Present themselves as objects recognized,
In flashes, and with glory not their own.

Change was most dramatic in French poetry. The distance traveled was from Voltaire to the wildness, the upliftment, the illimitable suggestion of Rimbaud's

Je sais les cieux crevant en éclairs, les trombes
Et les ressacs et les courants; je sais le soir,

L'aube exalté ainsi qu'un peuple de colombes,
Et j'ai vu quelquefois ce que l'homme a cru voir.

I know the skies split with lightning, the waterspouts
And the hidden currents; I know the evening awe,
The dawn uplifted like a people of doves,
And sometimes I have seen what men believed they saw.

In Baudelaire's untranslatable "L'Invitation au voyage" (1855) the order, the clarity, and the restraint which are the cardinal virtues of the French tradition form a perfect union with the rich and flexible music of the new poetry, with its sensuousness, its desire for the remote, the exotic, the indefinite, the mysterious:

Mon enfant, ma sœur,
Songe à la douceur
D'aller là-bas vivre ensemble!
Aimer à loisir
Aimer et mourir
Au pays qui te ressemble!
Les soleils mouillés
De ces ciels brouillés
Pour mon esprit ont les charmes
Si mystérieux
De tes traîtres yeux,
Brillant à travers leurs larmes.
Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Des meubles luisants,
Polis par les ans,
Décoreraient notre chambre;
Les plus rares fleurs
Mêlant leurs odeurs
Aux vagues senteurs de l'ambre,
Les riches plafonds,
Les miroirs profonds,
La splendeur orientale,
Tout y parlerait
À l'âme en secret
Sa douce langue natale.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Vois sur ces canaux
Dormir ces vaisseaux
Dont l'humeur est vagabonde;
C'est pour assouvir
Ton moindre désir
Qu'ils viennent du bout du monde.
—Les soleils couchants
Revêtent les champs,
Les canaux, la ville entière,
D'hyacinthe et d'or;
Le monde s'endort
Dans une chaude lumière.

Là, tout n'est qu'ordre et beauté,
Luxe, calme et volupté.

Chapter Seven

THIS UNEASY HEART OF OURS

OF THE GENERATION coming to maturity at the threshold of the nineteenth century the chief poets, Wordsworth and Hölderlin, born in 1770, and Novalis and Coleridge, born in 1772, agreed in fundamentals. They had faith in the soul of man, in a universal spirit pervading man and nature, and in the progress of humanity. They were mystics and individualists, rejecting materialistic science and social conformity. Convinced of their high mission as poets to interpret the universe, they saw nature as perfect and man as destined to perfection: "I love the race of the centuries to come," exclaimed Hölderlin. Their unanimity is in part easily comprehensible, for Wordsworth and Coleridge were friends and Hölderlin and Novalis, though unacquainted, were pupils of Fichte and had a mutual friend in Schelling. But the Englishmen and the Germans neither met nor read each other. The similarity of their outlook derives from the atmosphere of the late eighteenth century. During their twenties, European society was in transformation and the mechanistic interpretation of the universe was being challenged by post-Kantian philosophy. Desires and dreams seemed the key to man's destiny, and nature was doubly fair as the abode of spirit. These poets were young when "to be young was very Heaven."

With Hölderlin and Novalis disappears the distinction between poetic ideals and mundane reality observed by Goethe and Schiller. Not symbolically but actually, Hölderlin expected the return of the nature gods. Novalis tells us of his

mystic experience which "burst the bonds of birth. . . . The hill became dust-clouds—through the clouds I saw the radiant features of my beloved. . . . Millenniums withdrew into the distance like storms." In both, childlike innocence and intellectual acumen mingle without conflict. Coleridge, an exotic among English poets, seems a worldling beside them, and Wordsworth almost a Philistine. Yet for the Englishmen as well as for the Germans, the solid-seeming world clothed mystery. The splendor of the vision raised them to a pitch of ecstasy hard for mortal flesh to sustain. The vigorous and eminently sane Wordsworth complained of "the excitement of poetry." At thirty Coleridge suffered the fate that had been feared for the young Goethe: he burned himself out. His ode "Dejection" (1802) laments the departure of "the shaping spirit of imagination." In that same year the mind of Hölderlin gave way; and a few months earlier, Novalis had been received into the eternal night for which he yearned.

One May morning of that fateful year 1802, Wordsworth, happily in love, walked over a moor, feeling that "all things that love the sun are out of doors." From the very consciousness of his bliss arose thoughts of its opposite, of the melancholy lot of fellow-poets: Burns, Chatterton and, saddest of all, Coleridge, whose still unpublished "Dejection" was addressed to him:

We poets in our youth begin in gladness;
But thereof come in the end despondency and madness.

Wordsworth knew that the exhaustion of gladness meant the death of poetry:

By our own spirits are we deified.

To his ears returned Coleridge's despairing cry:

O William, we receive but what we give,
And in our life alone does Nature live:
Ours is her wedding garment, ours her shroud!

Four years before, when at twenty-eight he had revisited the scene near Tintern Abbey that had given him intense pleasure at twenty-three, he had already observed that the lapse of five years had subdued his "aching joys" and "dizzy raptures" to "quietness and beauty." But then he had felt no alarm, since in recompense he had gained "the joy of elevated thoughts" of the spirit that "rolls through all things." He had continued to live "a happy Child of earth" until warned now by the lives of other poets that he, too, was not exempt from "pain of heart, distress, and poverty." "Resolution and Independence" (1802; 1807) closes with the banishing of this melancholy mood by a chance meeting with an aged man earning his livelihood by patiently gathering leeches in face of a steadily diminishing supply: a symbolic exhortation to fortitude. But Wordsworth remained conscious that even if he were to escape the sickness and over-strain which were aging Coleridge prematurely, he still must reckon with an inevitable deadening of the senses. Could poetry which flowed from a feeling for nature survive youth?

Wordsworth approached this problem in composing the first four stanzas of what was to become the "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality." Finding no solution, he laid the ode aside and did not return to it until 1806. In the interval, came the great misfortune he had feared. Early in 1805, his favorite brother was lost at sea. Wordsworth's spirits never regained their full elasticity. In the grave "Ode to Duty" (1805; 1807) he abandoned reliance on "the genial sense of youth" to pray for "the spirit of self-sacrifice." In "Elegiac Stanzas Suggested by a Picture of Peele Castle," he confessed:

A deep distress has humanized my soul.

The sad wisdom of human experience advanced into the place left by the retreating glories of nature. In resuming the ode in his thirty-seventh year, he saw its problem not merely as his own but also as common to humanity, whose perceptions

were dulled by the pressure of custom and the burdens and responsibilities of communal existence. Even for himself there was no escape:

nothing can bring back the hour
Of glory in the grass, of splendor in the flower.

No longer came revelations of the spirit within material things. Yet the memory of these radiances remained, and nature, reinterpreted by the "philosophic mind" that knew suffering and mortality, spoke in symbols illuminated by "the faith that looks through death." The departure of youth need not take with it the poetry of nature; for nature remained eloquent in symbols for the human heart.

The ode, with its magnificent revival of the Platonic myth of preëxistence, with its freshness and radiance, with its ebb and flow of sorrow and joy in slow and fast movements, with its magnificent conclusion, is the summit of Wordsworth's art. But it was the last of its glories. The poet could not advance on the way he saw open; for the "deep power of joy" no longer urged his steps. The divinity once close by him in nature had departed to the skies. The collective humanity to which he had dedicated his genius gave little aliment to hope, dominated as it was by Napoleon abroad and by reaction at home. His verse lost flavor and went into a minor key, yearning for peace and counseling renunciation. Before Napoleon had fallen, Wordsworth's faith in human nature had largely yielded to what seemed the logic of events. Through the rest of his long life, with Coleridge, he was a lamentable figure to younger English poets fired by the visions of his early verse.



The poets of the post-Napoleonic era, Byron, Lamartine, Shelley, Keats, Vigny, Leopardi, Heine, born in the decade between 1788 and 1798, were not nourished in such hopes. Their childhood and adolescence knew almost continual war,

turmoil, and economic distress. Their flowering was in a time of reaction and exploitation which Shelley called "the winter of the world." But the fact that there had been a revolution established the possibility of change; what had been might be again. And the spontaneous idealism and unrest of youth were cheered by voices from a more sanguine day.

The clearest descent from eighteenth-century dreamers was Shelley's. His undirected reading had fallen upon Godwin and the *philosophes*, with their confidence in the liberating role of science and reason, and upon Wordsworth and Coleridge, who refreshed his faith in human goodness, intensified his delight in nature and his consciousness of the mighty spirit pervading it. But these dreamers involved his view of life in disturbing antitheses. For although they assured him that "every heart" contained "perfection's germ," somehow this germ was continually stifled in and by "tyrants" (the twentieth century has ceased to smile at Shelley's word); and the beatitude of nature mocked "ambiguous man . . . the burden and the glory of the earth." Shelley's incredibly active life involved defeats and fatigues bringing gloom as deep as his hope had been high. Like Hölderlin, he was "ever ebb and flow." Amazed at himself, he asked in his early "Hymn to Intellectual Beauty" (1817)

why man has such a scope
For love and hate, despondency and hope.

Although his sympathy was always with

the kings of thought
Who waged contention with their time's decay,

experience and survey of history drove him gradually toward the cyclic view of man's destiny in the final chorus of *Hellas*, which in the last year of his life wrung from him the prayer:

Cease! drain not to its dregs the urn
Of bitter prophecy.

The world is weary of the past,
Oh, might it die or rest at last!

The tragedy of man was enacted before a background of eternal beauty. No one more than Shelley has felt and made others feel the wonder and infinitude of the universe, worthy of a better onlooker than man. In the "Ode to the West Wind" and "The Cloud" the eternal renewal of nature rebukes human despair and mortality. The lark's ever-blithe spirit never piped for what is not, never knew "love's sad satiety." Nature feels none of the mocking unsatisfactoriness even of ideals, none of "the regret that pleasure leaves." But at length even nature could not restore the exhausted poet's nerves, less often at peace than waters. Before thirty, like Coleridge, he was burning himself out:

O world! O life! O time!
On whose last steps I climb,
Trembling at that where I had stood before;
When will return the glory of your prime?
No more—oh, never more!

Out of the day and night
A joy has taken flight;
Fresh spring, and summer, and winter hoar
Move my faint heart with grief, but with delight
No more—oh, never more!

Yet his faith in the spirit dwelling within nature remained. Toward a union with that spirit which would cancel the "eclipsing Curse of birth," the final stanzas of *Adonais*, like Novalis's *Hymns to the Night*, speed joyfully. The storm that drowned Shelley a few months later was uncannily like an answer to prayer.

Keats felt no spirit within nature. Without the religiosity of his predecessors, he knew no remoter splendor than the senses gave. What the earth offered, beauty of nature, of the arts, of woman, must suffice. His "Ode to a Nightingale," with the same theme as Shelley's "Skylark," is sadder and

richer from that consciousness. Nature renews herself eternally. The masterpieces of art, the figures on the Grecian urn, partake somewhat of nature's immortality. But the individual man and woman, however great or beautiful, can make but one brief passage through this glorious world. And how troubled the passage. Keats was too absorbed in battle against poverty and illness to write much of the social scene, but brief allusions are eloquent: the invective against capitalistic exploitation in "Isabella," and the verse,

No hungry generations tread thee down,

full of pity for the victors as well as the vanquished in the harsh postwar struggle for existence. Yet he knew that no social reform could eradicate the fundamental ironies of human life: the simultaneous ripening of the antagonistic forces of sex and intellect, and the paradox of sex gratification. These forces make inevitable the tragedy of "Lamia," which the interposition of Apollonius only hastens:

She began to moan and sigh
Because he mused beyond her, knowing well
That but a moment's thought is passion's passing bell.
'Why do you sigh, fair creature?' whispered he;
'Why do you think?' returned she tenderly. . . .
 . . . but too short was their bliss
To breed distrust and hate, that make the soft voice hiss.

His clear and profound mind told Keats that bliss had for its "neighbor pain"; that human passion left the heart "high sorrowful and cloyed"; but his equally extraordinary endowment of sense overcame a resistance measured by the painful dream symbolism of "La Belle Dame sans Merci." Consumed by the twin flames of love and of poetic creation, Keats at twenty-five, his mind and senses alike unsatisfied, departed from life as reluctantly as Shelley and Novalis had departed willingly. To the tragedy of the passing of youth he had added the tragedy of youth itself.

The gap between intellect and desire was still wider in Leopardi. He was reared in the extreme of the reaction against the French revolutionary invaders of Italy. Politically his father was to the right even of the Jesuits, to whom he confided the education of his children. His mother's piety rejoiced in her children's illnesses as possible gates to Heaven. To prevent his contamination by the world, the young Count was forbidden even at the age of twenty to go outside his door unaccompanied by a parent, tutor, or reliable servant. From the monastic discipline of a childhood lonely and without fostering love, he escaped through books and through musing on what lay beyond the horizons of the Apennines and the Adriatic. His father's library, so well stocked with Greek and Latin, opened the world of paganism. As a child he played at being an emperor returning to Rome in triumph. Dante and Petrarch stirred hopes of a united Italy worthy of its Roman heritage. And, in his adolescence, somehow, as if the Napoleonic troops in occupying Recanati during his earliest years had left contagion in the air, the ideas of the *philosophes* slipped into the carefully guarded palace. For the soul of the utterly inexperienced youth contended all the great Mediterranean civilizations, antique, mediaeval, Renaissance, pagan, Christian, scientific. His heart was with the moral idealism of the Stoic and the Christian, with the heroic myths of antiquity which ennobled man and made nature friendly. His head gave assent to materialistic science. Head and heart alike were shamed by the supine contemporary Italy, whose subservience to Austria and the Papacy he felt with especial bitterness in the espionage that defeated his attempt to flee from his uncongenial home at the age of twenty. This first experience of the world, a profound shock to his moral nature, cast him into stony despair. He was aroused by learning of the discovery in the Vatican of a manuscript of Cicero's *De re publica*, a miraculous voice from the past reminding Italy of lost freedom and glory. An ode to its discoverer, Angelo Mai,

reveals the clash of Leopardi's hopes with his inexorable sense of fact, of the past to which his imagination clung with the sorry present which his intellect recognized. Beyond the question of the future of his country, the issue broadens into a contrast of the happy ignorance of early civilizations and the sad knowledge of the modern: voyages of discovery had made the world smaller by dispelling the marvels with which the unknown was peopled. The ancients had been encouraged by a friendly Nature who "spoke without unveiling herself" as a soulless mechanism. What have proved to be illusions produced greatness in individuals; without them the present is delivered to mediocrity. Yet the ode "Ad Angelo Mai" concludes with hopes still resurgent.

For a time, Leopardi inclined to the deliberate cultivation of illusions, to a philosophy of "as if." But his mind could not drug itself. His Brutus ("Bruto minore," 1824) dies for virtue, though he knows it is sustained neither by the gods nor by nature:

Né scolorò le stelle humana cura

Nor did care for man ever pale the stars

is the succinct and comprehensive statement of humanity's isolation. Neither Rome, which at length he saw in 1823, nor other famous cities, Bologna, Milan, Florence, where more than half-blind he barely maintained independence by literary hackwork, raised Leopardi's opinion of his countrymen. The mystery of the world he had longed to see proved "unworthy." The ardor of a miraculous youth sank into apathy. From his twenty-fifth to his thirtieth year the fountain of his poetry almost ran dry.

Then inexplicably, without an alteration of his dark view of men and of nature, memories of childhood and adolescence, sad in circumstance but glorified by their ineffable visions, renewed his creative energy. "A Sylvia" and "Le ricordanze" are the most beautiful and poignant laments of lost youth in

a century prone to lament it, bitter sweet with alternate thoughts of the present and the past. With pity Leopardi observed what reconciled the unthinking humble to life: the expectation of pleasure never fulfilled, release from pain or from the threat of pain. The magnificent "Canto notturno" (1831) pictures the sum of things as it must appear to the thoughtful: nature immeasurably glorious but a soulless machine set to an eternally monotonous and purposeless routine, and the microcosm man fixed in a corresponding purposeless round of birth and death embittered gratuitously by pain and, worse, by boredom (*noia*), with which he alone among sentient beings is cursed. It was Leopardi's mature conviction that it is best not to have been born. Yet in the last year of his short life, spent beneath the menace of Vesuvius, in "La ginestra" he called upon men to cease from fratricidal strife and join in withstanding their real enemy: nature. The sincerity of Leopardi's denial of all value to life is unmistakable; yet the violence of the negation comes of disappointed love. His dreams are so entrancing that they oblige him to rebuild continually what the integrity of his intellect has called upon him to destroy. The equipoise of his faculties creates with his few brief lyrics a spacious realm of light and shade, as terrible, as beautiful, as incomprehensible as life.

The confusion of postwar Europe is more obvious in Byron, who was essentially neither a thinker nor a writer, but a man of pleasure and action. His early taste was catholic and undistinguished, accepting the vague melancholy of Gray and Ossian, the sentimentality of Tom Moore and the melodrama of Scott as well as the realism of Crabbe and the eighteenth-century satirists. Their conglomeration in a hard-boiled sentimentality made his literary fortune. For a time he enjoyed the best of two worlds as a privileged aristocrat with liberal views, a lion of drawing rooms in revolt against convention, a dandy with a dark secret. But the fundamental sincerity and courage of his defiance of reactionary politics and hypo-

critical morals at length brought the exile which matured his poetry. Association with Shelley in Switzerland drew him to reluctant admiration of the best work of Wordsworth, hitherto misjudged because of his political apostasy. Second-hand acquaintance with *Faust* sharpened the definition of *Manfred*. Italy, his refuge from 1816 to 1823, offered in the burlesque of Pulci and the irony of Ariosto the final constituents of a form that could contain the full heterogeneity of his personality and of his impressions of the era. Much of the secret of his maturing in *Don Juan*, Byron discloses in its Fourth Canto (1821):

the sad truth that hovers o'er my desk
Turns what was once romantic to burlesque.

And if I laugh at any mortal thing,
'Tis that I may not weep; and if I weep,
'Tis that our nature cannot always bring
Itself to apathy, for we must steep
Our hearts first in the depths of Lethe's spring,
E'er that we least wish to behold will sleep.

The late-won ability to laugh at himself gave his realism parity with his sentiment and idealism. If his feeling for nature was mediocre beside Coleridge's, his pantheism a mere echo of Wordsworthian sublimity, his vision of human possibilities not so soaring as Shelley's, his sense of beauty commonplace beside Keats's, he did not, like them, refine away the dross and slag of life. If his admiration for Pope failed to encompass the delicacy of his art, he could attain the manly vigor of Dryden, as well as Dryden's contempt for cant and easy handling of bulky materials. Byron was not seduced by facile solutions and panaceas. He carried within himself a Mephistopheles who corrected overstrained idealism by bringing poetry into wholesome contact with earth. He named more than "one thing which poesy seldom mentions." He stated inconvenient facts such as the role of puberty in transcendental visions, the victory of seasickness over love and

the obtrusion of self-preservation into humanitarian sentiment:

They grieved for those who perished with the cutter,
And also for the biscuit, casks, and butter.

But his anticlimax could draw tears as well as laughter out of the spectacle of human frailty.

An Italian marquis was waxing ecstatic over the beauty of a valley near Lucca. Detecting a smile on the face of his German companion, Heinrich Heine, he said with irritation: "You are a dismembered man . . . a divided soul, a Byron." In an aside to the reader of his *Baths of Lucca* (1829), Heine confesses his intolerance of "false feeling for nature" and his acceptance of this comparison to Byron as a compliment. For ten years he has heard the phrase, "Byronic dismemberment," bandied about: "If you are going to complain of this dismemberment, then complain rather, that the world is itself split in the middle. For since the heart of the poet is the center of the world, it must at the present time be lamentably torn apart. Whoever boasts that his heart has remained whole, only confesses that he has a prosaic, mathematical heart. But through mine went the great split of the world, and for that very reason I know that the gods have favored me high above many others and have judged me worthy of a poet's martyrdom. Once the world was whole, in antiquity and in the Middle Ages; in spite of superficial struggles there was always an inner unity and there were integrated poets. We honor these poets and rejoice in them, but every imitation of their unity is a lie that every sound eye penetrates."

With Heine, emerges into the full light of historical consciousness what Leopardi and Byron had felt in varying degrees. Like them, he had a literary and intellectual inheritance which he could not harmonize with his experience of the contemporary scene. His early verse is in the Germanic tradition: folk songs, legends and fairy tales, Goethean and post-

Goethean lyricism. But the imagination which could produce "Die Lorelei," "Die Rose, die Liebe, die Taube, die Sonne" and "Auf Flügeln des Gesanges" was dragged down by the sorry reality of his lot as a Jew in the Germany of the eighteen-twenties. He was galled by the price of conversion to Christianity demanded for his entrance into the legal profession. He had Byron's combativeness without the support of his aristocratic privileges and tradition of personal dignity. He was obliged to accept battle with inferiors whose contact besmirched him, to compromise and equivocate. By yielding in moments of great stress to the psychological heritage of a persecuted race in cringing and whining, he disgusted himself. Even in relation with his own people his self-esteem suffered from two disappointments in love with wealthy cousins. His family had been long established in Germany; German legend and German sentiment and sentimentality were in his blood. The ideals of Christianity were attractive; those of Judaism and pagan Greece were equally so. Grateful admiration of Napoleon, who had emancipated his people, and of the cosmopolitanism of Goethe and the Enlightenment made surrender to the newly awakened German nationalism impossible.

Heine had not the vigor and variety of Byron, but he was much the better artist. The manner of the sprawling, uneven *Don Juan* he distilled into brief lyrics with light touch, melody, and color. The earliest in this characteristic Heine style are lyrics of love, lyrics without the confident rapture of Goethe. Rapture Heine has, but he cannot sustain it for distrust; he must prepare himself for disillusion or rebuff. He watches his own suffering with a wry smile. Impulses to oversweetness are checked by tart epithets; impulses to spiritualization, by earthy images. Division of heart and head appropriates for itself parody and anticlimax. The gaze that is so candid when turned inward punctures charlatanism when directed outward. The cry:

Zu fragmentarisch ist Welt und Leben!

Too fragmentary is the world and life!

prompts a sneer at the German professor who has reduced both to a system and plugged the cracks in the world-edifice with his nightcap and dressing gown. Heine enjoys the ironic spectacle of eunuchs, who protest against the indelicacy of his verse, moving ladies to tears by the crystal pipings of their love songs.

Heine paid dearly for his cosmopolitanism by exile, dearly for his sceptical detachment by spiritual homelessness felt most keenly in his last bed-ridden years in Paris, when it seemed that his star

Hat im güldnen Labyrinth
Sich vielleicht verirrt am Himmel,
Wie ich selber mich verirrt
In dem irdischen Getümmel.

In the golden labyrinth of heaven
Perchance has lost its way,
As I, alas, have lost my own
In the turmoil of earth's day.

In his last poem, "Für die Mouche," he sees himself in a dream lying dead in a sarcophagus decorated with bas-reliefs of pagan gods, of Greek and barbarian warriors, of Baalam's ass, of Satan in Hell, and Christ disputing in the Temple. A passion flower over his head turns into the likeness of his beloved, to whom the poem is dedicated. She bends to kiss him. Their peace is shattered by a hideous uproar. The discordant figures on the sarcophagus have come to life and resumed their age-old quarrels. The poem breaks off with the intolerable heehaw of Baalam's ass—Heine's symbolic comment on the hopeless medley of his life.



After Heine, appeared no German poet of his international significance. Gervinus, whose history of German poetry be-

gan to appear in 1834, exhorted: "Germans, the time of literature is past, the moment of action has come. Your literary mission is accomplished; your political role is no less fine, and is still to be played." In Italy, the struggle for national unity likewise absorbed the successors of Leopardi, including Carducci. But in England and France, with the political victory of the capitalistic middle class in the early 'thirties the relations of poetry and society enter into a new phase.

The reading public grew enormously with the wealth created by the industrial and commercial revolutions, with cheap printing that multiplied books, periodicals and newspapers, and with an extension of educational opportunities that was a product of democratic ideas. Before the fall of Napoleon, Scott and Byron had sales unprecedented in the commercial history of poetry. From 1830 onward the industrialization of France gave similar opportunities to the generation of Victor Hugo. The financial advantage of the poet was offset by the problem of adjustment to new classes of readers: to business men, their wives and daughters, and to skilled workmen, whose unformed taste wavered between acceptance of upper-class standards as part of a conscious acquisition of culture, and demand for verse reflecting their own commercial, moral, and domestic interests. Great reward came to the author who could meet the desires of the half-educated, whether by chance or by design that might involve self-advertisement and charlatanry. Hugo, the *écho sonore* of his time, combined popular appeal with artistry, as in "Oceano nox" (1840); so also Tennyson in *The Princess* (1847) and even in *Enoch Arden* (1864). But most of the outstanding poets of the era 1830-1870—Vigny, Browning, Arnold, Leconte de Lisle, Swinburne, Baudelaire, Verlaine, Rimbaud—refused to accommodate themselves to the new audience. With the exception of Browning, they also opposed, or stood aside from, the movement of Franco-British society toward demo-plutocracy.

Vigny, born in 1797 as a contemporary of Keats, Leopardi, and Heine, was reared in the traditions of the *ancien régime* by his aristocratic, military family that had suffered the confiscation of its property during the Revolution; he served faithfully the restored Bourbons as an army officer. But fighting under the literary standards of Shakespeare and Byron so changed his political ideas that he did not rush from his retirement to the defense of Charles X in 1830. Yet he could not stomach the rule of Louis-Philippe, "based on money." Disdaining the vulgarity of the new literary Paris, he turned his back on his success as a poet, a dramatist, and a novelist. After 1835 he ceased to publish, though continuing to write for his own fastidious eye. His friend Sainte-Beuve described the gesture:

Vigny, plus secret,
Comme en sa tour d'ivoire, avant midi, rentrait,

Vigny, more reserved,
Returned before noon to his ivory tower,

coining a phrase for a portentous state of mind. After a long silence, Vigny permitted a few examples of his mature poetry to appear in *La Revue des Deux Mondes* between 1843 and 1854. Of his youthful period the masterpiece, "Moïse" (1822; 1826), had been an allegory of the suffering of the man of genius from isolation. "La Mort du loup" (The Death of the Wolf, 1843), which introduces his later verse, recommends acceptance of that suffering with stoic resignation:

Seul le silence est grand, tout le reste est faiblesse.

Silence alone is great, weakness all else.

Nevertheless in "La Maison du berger" of the same year Vigny overcomes his repugnance to lyrical confession, revealing an attitude toward the contemporary world very like Leopardi's, compounded of recoil, regret, and pity. Science has made the earth smaller; the era of speed inaugurated by the railroad

will invade solitudes and destroy reverie; great cities enslave the individual and promote hypocrisy; poets, commercializing their wares, have forgotten their high calling. The impulse to fly to nature for refreshment is checked by the knowledge that she is coldly indifferent. Her eternity insults human frailty and turns Vigny back in pity toward the mass of mankind. To the young genius who may be complaining of neglect and dreading the fate of Chatterton, Vigny addresses a parable, "La Bouteille à la mer" (The Bottle Cast into the Sea, 1854). He must forget himself in giving his work to the press, like an explorer who in facing shipwreck confides his scientific observations to a bottle thrown into the sea, with faith that God will not let vanish what is precious to humanity. Vigny's philosophy reaches its final stage in a conviction that stoic silence is not enough, that the poet owes humanity service which can expect no reward, that abnegation and pity are his destiny. The flower of the aristocratic tradition is *noblesse oblige*.

Poets born twenty years later, Leconte de Lisle in 1818, Baudelaire in 1821, and Arnold in 1822, upper-middle-class in origin and meeting greater middle-class pressure, had less support from the aristocratic outlook than Vigny. The two Frenchmen do not attain his lofty detachment and pity; their repudiation of the *bourgeois* order is scornful and acrid. Arnold, spiritually more akin to Vigny, is too worldly for the ivory tower. He observes that Wordsworth by retiring to Grasmere turned his eyes "from half of human fate," and he extolls Byron, Shelley, and Heine for swimming in and against the current of European civilization.

Yet Arnold thought that the protest of the preceding generation had been too emotional; the confusion which they reported so faithfully might still be resolved into unity by calm reflection. Into unity such as the great poets of the past—Sophocles, Dante, Milton, even Goethe to a lesser degree—had

attained. He was conscious, however, that Goethe had been born into a simpler world than his own, that much water had passed under the bridge in the century between 1749 and the revolutions of 1848. Near the opening of the latter eventful year he wrote to his fellow-poet Clough: "The poet's matter, being *the hitherto experience of the world, and his own*, increases with every century. . . . You may often hear my sinews cracking under the effort to unite matter." This effort pervades his verse from the first volume in 1849 to the last in 1867.

Arnold watched

Blocks of the past, like icebergs high,
Float in a rolling sea.

Industrialism, democracy, and science gave slight promise of crystallizing with what was fit to survive from the old order into a stable civilization and a new culture:

For most men in a brazen prison live,
Where in the sun's hot eye,
With heads bent o'er their toil, they languidly
Their lives to some unmeaning taskwork give,
Dreaming of naught beyond their prison wall,

deprived of leaders, since

Great qualities are trodden down,
And littleness united
Is become invincible.

Of what avail the vaunt of progress, of "triumph over time and space," if in "the great town's harsh, heart-wearying roar" we "never once possess our souls." The spiritual cement of former cultures was no longer usable, for rigorous thinking found in man's desire and need of a superintending Providence no guarantee of its existence, and tore from nature her aureole. Left alone in the universe, man must find his own cure for

this strange disease of modern life,
With its sick hurry, its divided aims,
Its heads o'ertax'd, its palsied hearts.

By 1855 Arnold had relegated the unity he desired to a dubious future, and saw himself

Wandering between two worlds, one dead,
The other powerless to be born.

Along with the dream of unity his Muse lost the upwelling joy which Wordsworth and Coleridge had pronounced essential to creation. Become against his will an elegiac poet, in his mid-forties Arnold abandoned verse for prose spadework on the foundations of a society hospitable to major poetry.

Arnold had been unable to escape the dilemma of Heine: "Since the heart of the poet is the center of the world, it must at the present time be lamentably torn apart." He had need of the Christianity that had given coherence to the outlook of Dante and of Milton; but since Milton it had been increasingly hard to "justify the ways of God to men." The religion of nature had eased the shock of the untenability of revealed religion; but soon it had itself been impugned. With the spectacle of a lamb stung by a reptile, symbolic of useless suffering, and with the fossil evidence of the extinction of whole species presented by Cuvier, Byron in 1821 motivated the revolt of his *Cain*, a revolt that profoundly disquieted Lamartine. To the appeal of Heine's "Fragen" (Questions, 1826) for light on man's origin and destiny, nature deigns no reply. The accumulation of knowledge leading up to Darwin had bearings upon faith in the immortality of the human individual that did not escape poets stricken with bereavement. Tennyson's *In Memoriam* (1850) has its counterpart in the agonized fears of Hugo's "À Villequier" (1855) before the evidence

Que la création est une grande roue
Qui ne peut se mouvoir sans écraser quelqu'un.

That creation is a great wheel
Which cannot move without crushing someone.

Tennyson and Hugo emerged from the ordeal with faith, but a faith never free from haunting doubt. The victory of doubt with Vigny and Arnold never extinguished desire for faith. In the same year with his recoil from the indifference of nature in "La Maison du berger," Vigny published "Le Mont des Oliviers" (The Mount of Olives, 1844), a magnificent interpretation of the drama of the Garden of Gethsemane. Jesus implores his Father in Heaven to complete his revelation by exculpating himself in man's eyes for having permitted evil and doubt. He waits with bowed head for an answer. When no answer comes, terror redoubles his agony. His eyes stare fixedly with infinite sorrow until Judas with a torch brings the soldiers. Among Vigny's papers were found seven noble verses dated April 2, 1862, when he was close to death from cancer of the stomach. They contain his ultimate reflections on the martyrdom of Jesus and of mankind:

S'il est vrai qu'au Jardin sacré des Écritures,
Le Fils de l'homme ait dit ce qu'on voit rapporté;
Muét, aveugle et sourd au cri des créatures,
Si le Ciel nous laissa comme un monde avorté,
Le juste opposera le dédain à l'absence
Et ne répondra plus que par un froid silence
Au silence éternel de la Divinité.

If it is true that in Gethsemane
The Son of Man spake as the Scriptures say;
If deaf, blind and mute to the cry of his creatures,
God disavowed us as an aborted world,
The just will meet his absence with disdain
And answer only with a chilly silence
The eternal silence of the Deity.

Arnold's farewell in "Dover Beach" (1867) to the faith that gave meaning to human existence is not stoical, but pierced with infinite regret:

The sea of faith
Was once, too, at the full; and round earth's shore
Lay like the folds of a bright girdle furl'd;
But now I only hear
Its melancholy, long, withdrawing roar,
Retreating to the breath
Of the night-wind down the vast edges drear
And naked shingles of the world.

Ah, love, let us be true
To one another! for the world, which seems
To lie before us like a land of dreams,
So various, so beautiful, so new,
Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light,
Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help for pain;
And we are here as on a darkling plain
Swept with confused alarms of struggle and flight
Where ignorant armies clash by night.

The "strange disease of modern life" which Vigny regarded with aloof pity and which thwarted Arnold, Baudelaire absorbed into poetry. Baudelaire's youth coincided with the extreme of the reaction against the *bourgeois* way of life that gave vogue to Byronic dandyism and Satanism. In the eyes of his Parisian circle of men of letters, painters and musicians, prudence, utilitarianism, respectability, and domesticity were affronts to the arts, to sincerity and to freedom. They strove to revive the gay and prodigal Louis XV manners in cafés where serious discussion of the arts was mingled with infinite tobacco, alcohol, and paradoxes subversive of conventional morals and politics. Money inherited on coming of age permitted Baudelaire to enjoy this existence to the full and to indulge his exquisite taste for objects of art and his bizarre taste in women. Two years sufficed to run through so much of his capital that his family humiliated him by forcing the appointment of a guardian over what remained. His tastes still chronically exceeding his allowance, for most of his life he was fleeing creditors from one obscure Parisian hotel to

another. Some years before his death at forty-six, he was prematurely aged and bent, a victim to the progressive ravages of syphilis. All this the flouted middle-class moralist could have predicted. But not its contribution to poetry. Out of Baudelaire's misery and his dreams grew *Les Fleurs du mal* (Flowers of Evil, 1857).

The meticulousness of his self-criticism, comparable to Leopardi's, withheld this, Baudelaire's first volume, from publication until he was thirty-six. Without the philosophical and historical grasp of Vigny and Arnold, Baudelaire had a richer culture in music and the fine arts, a more delicate ear, and supersensitive nerves. Without nostalgia for religion, for feudalism, for unspoiled nature, he took urban civilization for what it was, and recorded its effects upon himself, upon the privileged classes and upon the masses. He conquered for poetry a domain over which society had insisted in throwing a veil of discreet and hypocritical silence: the vices, the atrophies, the ugliness of the civilization that was boasting so loudly of its progress. He wrote without reforming purpose, for the sequel of 1848 had settled his conviction of the ineradicable depravity of the human heart. He was no more indulgent to himself than to the world. Upon him the past had an even stronger hold than upon Arnold and Vigny, because largely unconscious; in his blood was the morality of the Middle Ages with its stern mandate to confession. Certain survivals of juvenile paradoxes and poses apart, Baudelaire has a terrible sincerity. In urging himself to transmute his miseries into poetry he holds up the example of monks who frescoed their cloister walls with mementoes of death. The symbolic contrast in "Un Voyage à Cythere" (A Voyage to Cytheria) of the joyous antique worship of Venus and its atrocious penalties in modern times ends in mediaeval horror of the flesh:

Ah, Seigneur! donnez-moi la force et le courage
De contempler mon cœur et mon corps sans dégoût!

O Lord! give me the strength and the courage
To look upon my heart and body without disgust!

"Réversibilité," published in *La Revue des Deux Mondes*
when Baudelaire was only thirty-four, avows subtly and un-
flinchingly his anguish at the first approaches of age:

Ange plein de gaîté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse,
La honte, les remords, les sanglots, les ennuis
Et les vagues terreurs de ces affreuses nuits
Qui compriment le coeur comme un papier qu'on froisse?
Ange plein de gaîté, connaissez-vous l'angoisse?

Ange plein de bonté, connaissez-vous la haine,
Les poings crispés dans l'ombre et les larmes de fiel,
Quand la Vengeance bat son infernal rappel,
Et de nos facultés se fait le capitaine?
Ange plein de bonté, connaissez-vous la haine?

Ange plein de santé, connaissez-vous les Fièvres,
Qui, le long des grands murs de l'hospice blafard,
Comme des exilés, s'en vont d'un pied trainard,
Cherchant le soleil rare et remuant les lèvres?
Ange plein de santé, connaissez-vous les Fièvres?

Ange plein de beauté, connaissez-vous les rides,
Et la peur de vieillir, et ce hideux tourment
De lire la secrète horreur du dévouement
Dans les yeux où longtemps burent nos yeux avides?
Ange plein de beauté, connaissez-vous les rides?

Ange plein de bonheur, de joie et de lumières,
David mourant aurait demandé la santé
Aux émanations de ton corps enchanté!
Mais de toi je n'implore, ange, que tes prières,
Ange plein de bonheur, de joie et de lumières!

Angel full of joy, do you know the anguish,
The shame, remorse, the sobs, the weariness
And the vague terrors of those frightful
Nights that crumple up the heart like paper?
Angel full of joy, do you know the anguish?

Angel full of goodness, do you know the hate,
The fists clenched in the darkness, tears of gall,

When Vengeance beats his hellish call to arms
And makes him master of our faculties?
Angel full of goodness, do you know the hate?

Angel full of health, do you know the Fevers,
Which like exiles drag their feet along
The great wan wall of the hospital
Seeking the scant sun and muttering?
Angel full of health, do you know the Fevers?

Angel full of beauty, do you know the wrinkles,
The fear of growing old, the hideous torment
To read the secret horror of mere devotion
In eyes where our eyes long drank deep?
Angel full of beauty, do you know the wrinkles?

Angel full of goodness, joy and light,
The dying David would have sought to draw
Health from your enchanted body's youth!
But I, O angel, only implore your prayers,
Angel full of goodness, joy and light!

The king of terrors was *ennui*—that characteristic malady of a sedentary leisure class in the highest urban civilizations, the *tedium vitae* of the Romans. From an existence in which desire and will were hopelessly severed,

Où l'action n'est pas la sœur du rêve,

the cult of art which he substituted for nature could not save him, and escape through drugs was but temporary. The posthumous sonnet "Recueillement" (Meditation, 1868) is among the most intimate and moving confessions of incurable affliction. The typical outlet of boredom in "modern" civilizations, whether in Alexandria, Rome, Versailles or industrialized Paris, was lust for destruction. *Ennui*, in Baudelaire's sinister phrase, "dreams of scaffolds while smoking its hookah" ("rêve d'échafauds en fumant son houka").

Two years before Baudelaire's death in 1867, the young Paul Verlaine wrote with insight: "The profound originality of Charles Baudelaire is in representing powerfully and es-

entially . . . the modern physical man, such as the refinements of an excessive civilization have made him, the modern man with his senses sharpened and vibrant, his mind painfully subtle, his brain saturated with tobacco, his blood burned with alcohol." Baudelaire likewise was original in interpreting the modern metropolis Paris with its monuments and memories of a rich past:

Fourmillante cité, cité pleine de rêves,
Où le spectre en plein jour raccroche le passant!

Swarming city, city full of dreams,
Where in broad daylight the spectre accosts the passer-by!

"Les Sept Vieillards" and "Les Aveugles" reveal its horrors and arresting mysteries; "Paysage," its grandeur and beauty seen from an attic window. Baudelaire's profound pity for the masses whose labor maintained Parisian luxury has an authenticity grown of long observation on solitary walks. "Le Vin des chiffonniers," a ragpicker's inebriated dreams of grandeur, "Les Petites Vieilles," a collective portrait of old women worn out in the city's service of toil and vice appropriately dedicated to Victor Hugo, and "La Servante au grand coeur," memories of a devoted domestic, are among the earliest masterpieces of proletarian verse. "Le Crépuscule du matin" and "Le Crépuscule du soir" are grand pictures of urban toilers compressed into small canvases. *Tableaux parisiens*, which Baudelaire styled ironically "my eclogues," bring back poetry to the city after an estrangement of almost a century. Yet the change in attitude is profound. Paris is not lauded as the center of the highest refinement, but depicted as a sort of Hell.



The frankness of Baudelaire's avowals and his bold pioneering in subjects are set off by traditional versification and dignified formality of language. After two hundred years in

the strait jacket of Malherbe, the French lyric had been slow in recovering familiarity and ease. The informal tone was hard to catch. Lamartine's pitfall was oratory, Musset's lachrymose sentiment, Hugo's naïve egoism or rhetorical posturing. Progress toward flexible form and the vocabulary of the spoken language was still slower. Hugo, the most experimental, lagged far behind his claim in "Réponse à une acte d'accusation" (1856) to have put the Jacobin bonnet on the dictionary. He was content with a few colloquialisms, somewhat more supple syntax and run-on lines with more pauses within the line. He had not tampered with the rules for rhyming that obligated a pause at the end of each line and had not explored musical effects concealed by obsolete spellings. The final step to a lyricism in which the voice of the poet could be heard in personal cadences and vocabulary was taken by Paul Verlaine.

A weak character without intellectual pretensions, Verlaine was absorbed in sensations and emotions, chiefly of love and nature. The music he heard within him, delicate and languorous, and the evanescent moods of nature, required keys and pedals missing in the national versification, originally fashioned for clarity and objectivity. Verlaine began gradually to muffle rhyme, to choose words for their musical value and emotional associations. He drew his readers into his own world by treating the language with unwonted familiarity, naming the most trivial objects, interrupting syntax with casual colloquialisms, reviving obsolete words. Disregarding the rule obliging alternation of masculine and feminine rhymes, he exploited the softer effects and minor key of the feminine stress. His ear safely introduced pauses at unprecedented points within the verse to produce rhythms of surprising suppleness and lightness. His first volumes, *Poèmes saturniens* (1866) and *Fêtes galantes* (1869), avoided explicitness and established communication by means of suggestion, implication, and eloquent reticence. Anticipation of a

happy marriage shifted Verlaine temporarily to a major key in *La Bonne Chanson* (1870); fuller sound and graver tone blend with his ease of flight in love lyrics of a freshness unknown in the language since Ronsard. The voice of the young Goethe seems to return in

Avant que tu t'en ailles,
Pale étoile du matin,
—Mille cailles
Chantent, chantent dans le thym.—

Tourne devers le poète,
Dont les yeux sont pleins d'amour;
—L'alouette
Monte au ciel avec le jour.—

Tourne ton regard que noie
L'aurore dans son azur;
—Quelle joie
Parmi les champs de blé mur!—

Puis fais luire ma pensée
Là-bas,—bien loin, oh, bien loin!
—La rosée
Gaiement brille sur le foin.—

Dans le doux rêve ou s'agite
Ma mie endormie encor . . .
—Vite, vite,
Car voici le soleil d'or.—

Before you fail,
Dim star of the east,
—A thousand quail
Sing, sing in the waste.—

Turn toward the poet,
Whose eyes are full of love;
—The lark
With the day mounts above.—

Turn your glance that in azure
The dawn drowns again;

—What pleasure
In the fields of ripe grain!—
Then let my thought shine through
Far, oh, so far away!
—The dew
Gaily gleams on the hay.—
To where my love gives heed
To a dream still spun . . .
—Speed, speed,
For here is the golden sun.

The characteristic Verlaine persists with the inimitable and untranslatable music of

La lune blanche
Luit dans les bois;
De chaque branche
Part une voix
Sous la ramée . . .
O bien-aimée.
L'étang reflète,
Profond miroir,
La silhouette
Du saule noir
Où le vent pleure . . .
Rêvons: c'est l'heure.
Un vaste et tendre
Apaisement
Semble descendre
Du firmament
Que l'astre irise . . .
C'est l'heure exquise.

Verlaine's innovations were accelerated by the impact of a complementary personality, virile and decisive. In the late summer of 1871, while he still felt the agitation of the siege of Paris and the Commune, he received from the industrial

city of Charleville, near the Belgian border, a letter from a certain Arthur Rimbaud, enclosing poems in which he found "terrifying beauty." Impulsively he invited the unknown author to be his guest in Paris. Expecting a man of more than his own twenty-seven years, he was amazed at the arrival of a raw-boned, cherubic-faced, savage adolescent of sixteen. In world poetry there is scarcely a parallel to Rimbaud's precocity. To impress the Parisians, he had just composed "Bateau ivre," the climax of poems displaying amazing endowments, imaginative, intellectual, sensuous, linguistic, at the service of an iconoclastic will and a heartlessness toward all humanity except the exploited and the outcast. To Verlaine's cautious extensions of the poetic vocabulary, Rimbaud had added provincialisms, vulgarisms, scientific terms, coined words. He used the ugly and the unpleasant for calculated contrasts; one of his most melodious poems bears the title, "Les Chercheuses de poux" (The Seekers of Lice). Verlaine painted in water colors of tender shades and harmonies: Rimbaud splashed his canvas with fulgorant primary colors. His tumultuous imagination crowded image on image, straining with metaphors a language that prefers the more leisurely simile. In flight from society he yielded himself to nature in verses that are poems in themselves:

Mais fondre où fond ce nuage sans guide!
Oh, to melt where melts this guideless cloud!

Fileur éternel des immobilités bleus
Eternal threader of blue immobilities,

Martyr lassé des pôles et des zones
Exhausted martyr of the poles and zones.

But the brutal, sublime realism of these early poems had no sequel. "Bateau ivre," a defiance of society by a superman, was already the product of a theory of poetry which turned its back upon this world to construct another. Rimbaud believed that the poet should make himself a "seer" able to arrive at

"the unknown" by "a long, immense and deliberate *derangement* of *all* the senses." To this end, after the example of Baudelaire, he called in the aid of alcohol, tobacco, and drugs. By sheer effort of will, he disordered his superbly clear intellect, abandoned his rich and earthy vocabulary in search of a rarefied diction "accessible to all the senses," and broke the conventions of form with a medley of poetic prose and verse in which rhymes were frequently replaced by assonances and sometimes omitted. By a sort of materialistic mysticism, he strove to penetrate to aspects of nature hitherto undiscovered by the senses. The quest for originality could scarcely go further. Its result in *Les Illuminations*, written in 1872, was entrancing in rhythms and in diction catching elusive impressions of eternally mutable nature. But the poems were incoherent to the extent of obscurity. Intent on inner vision, Rimbaud had neglected the prime object of the national literature: communication. He judged his enterprise an Icarian failure. The prose poetry of *Une Saison en enfer* (*A Season in Hell*, 1873), the only one of his works he published, is allegoric confession of the defeat of a Satanic pride. In three years before his nineteenth birthday, Rimbaud had run through his literary inheritance and had passed beyond it. He disdained to turn back. With a final extraordinary effort of will he renounced literature with the design to prove his superiority where the energies of his contemporaries were most directed—in money making. He who had been imagination all compact, turned every thought to practical affairs. The new life, which in his detestation of European civilization drew him to Arabia and Abyssinia, was a failure. But Rimbaud never wrote a line of verse in the eighteen years that remained to him.

The meteoric passage of Rimbaud had lasting effects upon literature. He had called into question the cardinal principles of French verse: clarity, coherence, select vocabulary, reason, and rhyme. He had illustrated in terms of a language least

prepared for the purpose and for a people least disposed to accept it, a novel sense of the "meaning" of a poem: meaning as apprehensible by the senses and the imagination without the mediation of the intellect. Suggestion, symbols, analogies, by requiring the active collaboration of the reader, created poetry for an élite. Together with Baudelaire and Verlaine, Rimbaud pointed the way for the most recent poetic schools of European importance, the Symbolist and the Surrealist. While his poems were still in manuscript, they emboldened Verlaine to be more intimate in tone, more supple in rhythm and more catholic in vocabulary. In 1882 Verlaine published a versified "*Art poétique*" (wr. 1874), repudiating Boileau's outworn doctrines. Its attack on rhyme is pure Rimbaud. The recommendation of lightness and suggestion is common to both innovators. The insistence upon music and nuance, the attacks on intellectualism and rhetoric are characteristic Verlaine. Quite as significant as the creed is the illustrative verse in which Verlaine clothes it, far from the solid Boileau in its music and imponderability, in the airy flight and gesture of dismissal of the concluding quatrain:

Que ton vers soit la bonne aventure
Éparse au vent crispé du matin
Qui va fleurant le menthe et le thym . . .
Et tout le reste est littérature.

Let your verse be the good adventure
Tossed to the keen wind of morn
That skims the mint and the thyme. . . .
All the rest is mere literature.

With Rimbaud and Verlaine, its masculine and feminine manifestations, the French lyric became fully emancipated.



The liberation of lyricism in France completed the cycle of the European revolt against the taste of the era of Louis XIV. Within the hundred years between the meeting of

Goethe and Herder in 1770 and the abandonment of verse by Rimbaud lie the masterpieces of a poetic revival. An epoch in literary history stands out clearly.

And an epoch of European civilization. A clustering of dates is significant: 1859, *The Origin of Species*; 1867, the Second English Reform Act, Karl Marx's *Capital*; 1869, Schliemann begins to excavate the site of Troy; 1871, the unification of Germany and Italy, the Third French Republic; 1872, Nietzsche's *Birth of Tragedy*; 1873, Clerk Maxwell's *Electricity and Magnetism*, Rimbaud's *A Season in Hell*. The poetry that lay ahead was to be shaped by the great change in the scale of civilization.

Steam-driven machinery had increased enormously the production of material goods. The railroad and the steamboat, the telegraph and the cable had quickened proportionately transport and communication. Population had grown and congregated in cities of unprecedented size. At last science was ready to produce and to distribute sufficiently for the well-being of all. But the European mind was reluctant to accept the consequences of this change of scale, disruptive of the political, economic, and class divisions that survived from the immemorial era of handicrafts, of pre-scientific agriculture, and of travel by horse and sail. National units too small for the free play of steam and electricity were cherished for cultural ties and for historical memories strengthened and quickened by the recently awakened nationalism. The traditional class system blocked the equitable distribution of the products of machine industry. The hold-over from an economy of scarcity of a needlessly long working day deprived the worker of the increased leisure that might have compensated for the monotonous division of labor. Unable to turn backward and unwilling to adjust itself to the logic of applied and pure science, Europe was suffering from internal strain. Overproduction, the result of underdistribution and of tariff barriers, found outlet in rival imperialisms for the

exploitation of "backward" peoples. The dominant social philosophies, laissez-faire capitalism, the Darwinian struggle for existence and the Marxian class struggle, made peace war under another name.

In this atmosphere of maladjustment and conflict, the faiths and myths that had stimulated and sustained poetry were losing power and validity. Confidence in the high destiny of humanity and in the poet as its conscience and its guide, shaken by the sequel of 1848, vanished before the arrangements of 1871. After Nietzsche and Schliemann, Greece ceased to be the inspiring example of a perfect society which had been in Europe and might be again. The poet lost faith that the support of Nature and of Nature's God made his words invincible just when he needed it most to confront stupendous material forces, the power of money and the pressure of numbers. Victor Hugo was the last to maintain with conviction and effectiveness the prophetic role. The hope that a wider audience would be created for poetry by the spread of literacy and of popular freedom vanished with the appearance of crass plutocrats and a mechanized proletariat where late eighteenth-century dreamers had anticipated a cultivated middle class and peasants and artisans nurtured on folk songs. The plutocracy had become so well entrenched that the ridicule of Heine and Baudelaire, the invective of Leconte de Lisle and the scorn of Vigny seemed alike futile.

Isolated and disillusioned in a society increasingly indifferent to spiritual values and blundering toward catastrophe, poets ceased to write of the world and turned their gaze inward to explore their most personal impressions, even into the realms of the subconscious and the unconscious. To this peculiarly intimate and delicate form of self-expression the French, with the fresh energy of late converts to lyricism, led the way, and reassumed leadership of European poetry. The Symbolist School abandoned the national idols of clarity and communication. Stéphane Mallarmé's allusiveness was un-

intelligible except to specialized readers of poetry. Jules Laforgue, even more than the aging Browning, failed to provide bridges for those who would follow the leaps of his thought. The Symbolists employed words as analogies to suggest essentially inexpressible events within highly sensitive souls, or merely for their musical and pictorial value. They recorded upwellings from the subconscious and the unconscious that revealed survivals of the primitive beneath the layers of civilization. Thus they conquered a new province for poetry. But they left the entrance open only to initiates. In defiance of the triumphs of material power and the indifference of the mass of mankind, they made poetry an inviolable sanctuary for quality and distinction.

Yet confinement to the inner life and to the stored artistry of the past did not permit abiding satisfaction. From Mallarmé, the high priest of esoteric verse in the grand style, escaped a cry more despairing than any of Faust's:

La chair est triste, hélas! et j'ai lu tous les livres.

The flesh is dull, alas! and I have read all the books.

Recurrent yearning for fresh lands and primitive peoples, like Swinburne's lines "To Walt Whitman in America" (1871), betrays profound unrest in a Europe weighed down by its past and apprehensive of its future. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, the phrase *fin de siècle* had international currency as the expression of jaded sophistication and reckless futility foreign to the final years of the eighteenth century, that glad confident morning of a perfectible humanity and a rejuvenated poetry.

Appendix One

COMPARATIVE CHRONOLOGY OF POEMS, EVENTS, AND IDEAS IN ENGLAND, FRANCE, GER- MANY, AND ITALY

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
	1631. Dryden born	
	1635. French Academy founded	
	1636. Boileau born	
		1637. Descartes: <i>Discours de la Méthode</i>
	1639. Jean Racine born	
	1660. Charles II re- stored to Brit- ish throne	
	1661. Louis XIV as- sumes person- al rule	
		1665. La Rochefou- cauld: <i>Max- imes morales</i>
1666. Molière: <i>Le Misanthrope</i>		
1667. Milton: <i>Para- dise Lost</i>		
Racine: <i>Andromaque</i>		

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1668. La Fontaine: <i>Fables</i>		
1670. Racine: <i>Bérénice</i>		
1671. Milton: <i>Samson Agonistes</i>		
1674. Boileau: <i>Art poétique, Le Lutrin</i>	1673. Molière dies	
		1680-81. Boileau's <i>Art poétique</i> translated in- to English
1681. Dryden: <i>Ab- salom and Achitophel</i>	1681. Louis XIV seizes Strass- burg	
	1685. Edict of Nantes re- voked	
1687. Dryden: <i>The Hind and the Panther</i>		1687. Newton: <i>Principia</i>
	1688. Revolution in England. Pope born	1688. La Bruyère: <i>Caractères</i>
		1690. Locke: <i>Essay on the Human Understand- ing</i>
1691. Racine: <i>Ath- alie</i>		1694. <i>Dictionary of the French Academy</i>
	1695. La Fontaine dies	
1697. Dryden trans- lates <i>Virgil's Works</i>		

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
	1699. Racine dies	
	1700. Dryden dies	
1707. La Motte: <i>Odes</i> (in prose)		
	1709. Johnson born	
1711. Pope: <i>An Essay on Criticism</i>	1711. Boileau dies	
1712. Pope: <i>The Rape of the Lock</i>		
1714. La Motte translates <i>Iliad</i>	1714. Louis XIV dies	
1715 ff. Pope trans- lates the <i>Iliad</i>		
	1716. Gray born	
	1728. Goldsmith born	
	1731. Cowper born	
1733. Pope: <i>Essay on Man</i>		1734. Voltaire: <i>Lettres anglaises</i> (popularizing Newton and Locke)
1735. Pope: <i>Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot</i>		
	1736. Macpherson born	
	1744. Herder born. Pope dies	
1748. Klopstock: <i>Messias</i>		1748. La Mettrie: <i>L'Homme machine</i>
	1749. Goethe born	

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
		1750. J. J. Rousseau: <i>Discours sur les sciences et les arts</i>
1751. Gray: <i>Elegy Wrote in a Country Churchyard</i>		1751-1780. The French <i>Encyclopédie</i>
	1752. Chatterton born.	
	1755. Schiller born	
1756. Voltaire: "La Loi naturelle"		1756. Mme du Châtelet translates Newton's <i>Principia</i>
1757. Gray: <i>Pindaric Odes</i>	1757. Blake born	
		1758. Helvétius: <i>De l'Esprit</i>
	1759. Burns born	1759. Young: <i>On Original Composition</i> . Lessing: <i>Literaturbriefe</i>
1760, 1762, 1763. Macpherson: "Ossian"		
	1762. A. Chénier born	1762. Rousseau: <i>Émile; Le Contrat social</i>
1763. Parini: <i>Il Matino</i>	1763. Wars of Frederick the Great end	
		1764. Winckelmann: <i>Geschichte der Kunst des Altertums</i>

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
		1767 ff. Lessing: <i>Hambur- gische Drama- turgie</i>
1768. Chatterton writes the "Songe of Aella." Wieland: <i>Musarion</i>	1769. Herder's voy- age to France	
1770. Goldsmith: <i>The Deserted Village</i>	1770. Chatterton dies. Goethe meets Herder. Wordsworth and Hölder- lin born	1770. Holbach: Sys- <i>tème de la na- ture</i>
1771. Composition of Goethe's important lyr- ics begins	1771. Gray dies	
	1772. Coleridge and Novalis born	
	1774. Goldsmith dies	1773. Goethe: <i>Götz</i>
1775. Goethe: first version of <i>Faust</i> com- posed	1775. Goethe set- tles in Weimar	1774. Goethe: <i>Werther</i>
	1776. America de- clares inde- pendence	1776. A. Smith: <i>Wealth of Na- tions</i>
	1778. Foscolo born	
		1781. Rousseau: <i>Confessions.</i>

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
		1781. Kant: <i>Kritik der reinen Vernunft</i>
1783. Blake: <i>Poetical Sketches</i>		
	1784. Johnson dies	
1785. Cowper: <i>The Task</i>	1785. Manzoni born. Steam loom used in Eng- land	
1785-1791. Chénier: <i>Églogues</i> and <i>Élégies</i> (composed). Schiller: "An die Freude"		
1786. Burns: <i>Poetical Works</i>		
	1787. Constitution of the United States	
1788. Schiller: "Die Götter Griechenlands"	1788. Byron born	1788. Kant: <i>Kritik der praktischen Vernunft</i>
1789. Alfieri: <i>Bruto Secondo</i> . Blake: <i>Songs of Innocence</i>	1789. French Revolution	1789. Bentham: <i>Introduction to the Principles of Morals and Legislation</i>
1790. Goethe: <i>Torquato Tasso</i> and <i>Faust: ein Fragment</i>	1790. Lamartine born	
	1792. Shelley born	
	1793. England declares war on France	1793. Godwin: <i>Political Justice</i>

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1794. Blake: <i>Songs of Experience</i>	1794. A. Chénier guillotined	1794. Fichte: <i>Wissenschaftslehre</i>
1795. Goethe: <i>Römische Elegien</i>	1795. Keats born	
1796-1802. Hölderlin's best lyrics written	1796. Napoleon invades Italy. Burns dies	
	1797. Heine and Vigny born	1797. Schelling: <i>Philosophie der Natur</i>
1798. Wordsworth and Coleridge: <i>Lyrical Ballads</i>	1798. Leopardi born	1798. Malthus: <i>Principle of Population</i>
	1799. Labor unions outlawed in England	1799-1825. Laplace: <i>Mécanique céleste</i>
1800. Novalis: <i>Hymnen an die Nacht</i>	1800. Cowper dies	1800. Wordsworth: Preface to <i>Lyrical Ballads</i> (2nd edition)
	1801. Novalis dies	
1802. Coleridge: "Dejection"	1802. Hugo and Lenau born	1802. Chateaubriand: <i>Génie du christianisme</i>
	1802-1803. Peace of Amiens. Wordsworth revisits France	
	1803. Herder dies	
	1804. Napoleon proclaimed Emperor	
	1805. Schiller dies	

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1807. Foscolo: <i>I Sepolcri</i> . Wordsworth: <i>Poems</i>		1807. Fichte: <i>Reden an die deutschen Nation</i> . Hegel: <i>Phänomenologie des Geistes</i>
1808. Goethe: <i>Faust</i> ; Part One	1809. Tennyson born	
	1810. Musset born	1810-1813. Mme de Staël: <i>De l'Allemagne</i>
		1811. Niebuhr: <i>Römische Geschichte</i>
1812. Byron: <i>Childe Harold</i> , Cantos I and II	1812. R. Browning born	
1812-1822. Manzoni: <i>Inni sacri</i>		
1814. Wordsworth: <i>The Excursion</i>	1814. London <i>Times</i> printed by steam press	
	1815. Waterloo; Bourbons re- stored to French throne	
1816. Shelley: <i>Alastor</i> . Coleridge: "Christabel" and "Kubla Khan." Byron: <i>Childe Harold</i> , Canto III		1816. Hegel: <i>Logik</i>

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1817. Byron: <i>Manfred</i>		1817. Ricardo: <i>Principles of Political Economy</i>
1818. Keats: <i>Endymion</i> . Leopardi: "All' Italia"	1818. Leconte de Lisle born	
1819-1824. Byron: <i>Don Juan</i>	1819. "Peterloo" massacre	1819. Sismondi: <i>Nouveaux Principes d'économie politique</i> . Schopenhauer: <i>Die Welt als Wille und Vorstellung</i>
1820. Keats: <i>Poems</i> (including "Lamia," the Odes, and "Hyperion"). Shelley: <i>Prometheus Unbound</i> . Lamartine: <i>Méditations poétiques</i>		
1821. Byron: <i>Cain</i>	1821. Baudelaire born. Keats dies	
1822. Byron: <i>Vision of Judgment</i>	1822. Arnold born. Shelley dies	
1824. Leopardi: <i>Versi</i> (including "Bruto Minore")	1824. Byron dies. Labor unions legalized in England	

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1826. Vigny: <i>Poèmes antiques et modernes</i>		
1827. Heine: <i>Buch der Lieder</i>	1827. Battle of Navarino liberates Greece. Blake and Foscolo die	1827. Hugo: Preface to <i>Cromwell</i>
1829. Hugo: <i>Les Orientales</i>		
1830. Tennyson: <i>Poems</i> (including "Lady of Shallot")	1830. Second French Revolution. German Zollverein. The "battle of Hernani"	1830. Lyell: <i>Principles of Geology</i> , Volume I
1831. Leopardi: <i>Canti</i> (including "Le ricordanze"). Hugo: <i>Feuilles d'automne</i>		
	1832. First British Reform Act. Goethe dies	
1833. Goethe: <i>Faust</i> ; Part Two Musset: <i>Rolla</i>	1833. Factory Act restricts child labor in England	
	1834. Coleridge dies	1834. Lamennais: <i>Paroles d'un croyant</i>
	1835. Carducci born	1835. Toqueville: <i>Démocratie en Amérique</i>
1836. Lenau: "Der Urwald"		

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
	1837. Leopardi dies. Swinburne born	
1840. Hugo: <i>Rayons et ombres</i>		1840. Louis Blanc: <i>L'Organisation du travail</i> . P. J. Proudhon: <i>De la propriété</i>
	1841. First child labor restrictions in French factories	
1842. R. Browning: <i>Dramatic Lyrics</i> . Tennyson: <i>Poems</i> (including "The Two Voices")	1842. Mallarmé and Heredia born	
	1843. Hölderlin dies	1843. Carlyle: <i>Past and Present</i>
1844. Vigny: "La Maison du berger"	1844. Verlaine born	1844. Chambers: <i>Vestiges of Creation</i>
	1848. Second French Republic. Revolutions throughout Europe	1848. J. S. Mill: <i>Principles of Political Economy</i>
1849. Arnold: <i>The Strayed Reveler and Other Poems</i>		
1850. Tennyson: <i>In Memoriam</i>	1850. Wordsworth and Lenau die	
1852. Arnold: <i>Empedocles</i> . Leconte de	1852. The Second French Empire	

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
1852. (<i>Cont.</i>) Lisle: <i>Poèmes antiques</i>		
1853. Hugo: <i>Les Châtiments</i>		
1854. Heine writes "L'Enfant perdu"	1854. Rimbaud born	
1855. R. Browning: <i>Men and Women</i>		
1856. Hugo: <i>Les Contemplations</i>	1856. Heine dies	
1857. Baudelaire: <i>Les Fleurs du mal</i>	1857. Musset dies	
1859. Hugo: <i>La Légende des siècles</i>		1859. Darwin: <i>Origin of Species</i>
	1860. Laforgue born	
1862. Leconte de Lisle: <i>Poèmes barbares</i>		
	1863. Vigny dies	1863. Huxley: <i>Man's Place in Nature</i>
	1864. Labor unions legalized in France	
1865. Swinburne: <i>Atalanta in Calydon</i>		
1867. Arnold: <i>New Poems</i>	1867. Second British Reform Act. Baudelaire dies	1867. Marx: <i>Das Kapital</i>
1869. Leconte de Lisle:	1869. Lamartine dies. Schlie-	

POETIC WORKS	IMPORTANT EVENTS	SOURCES OF IDEAS
"Quaïn"	mann exca- vates "Troy"	
1870. Verlaine: <i>La Bonne Chan- son</i>		
1871. Swinburne: <i>Songs before Sunrise.</i> R. Browning: <i>Balaustion's Adventure.</i> Rimbaud writes "Ba- teau ivre"	1871. Germany and Italy achieve national unity. The Third French Re- public	
		1872. Nietzsche: <i>Die Geburt der Tragödie</i>
1873. Carducci: "Il bove." Rim- baud: <i>Une Saison en enfer</i>	1873. Manzoni dies	1873. Maxwell: <i>Electricity and Magne- tism</i>
1875. Carducci: "Alle fonti del Clitumno"		
1876. Mallarme: <i>L'Après-midi d'un faune</i>		
1885. Laforgue: <i>Les Com- plaintes</i>		
	1887. Laforgue dies 1888. Arnold dies 1889. Browning dies 1891. Rimbaud dies 1892. Tennyson dies	
1893. Heredia: <i>Les Trophées</i>		

Appendix Two

CHRONOLOGICAL LIST OF THE CHIEF POETS

- 1621-1695. La Fontaine, Jean de
1622-1673. Molière (Poquelin, Jean-Baptiste)
1631-1700. Dryden, John
1688-1744. Pope, Alexander
1709-1784. Johnson, Samuel
1716-1771. Gray, Thomas
1728-1774. Goldsmith, Oliver
1731-1800. Cowper, William
1736-1796. Macpherson, James
1744-1803. Herder, Johann Gottfried
1749-1832. Goethe, Johann Wolfgang
1752-1770. Chatterton, Thomas
1755-1805. Schiller, Friedrich
1757-1827. Blake, William
1759-1796. Burns, Robert
1762-1794. Chénier, André
1770-1843. Hölderlin, Friedrich
1770-1850. Wordsworth, William
1772-1801. Novalis (Hardenberg, Friedrich von)
1772-1834. Coleridge, Samuel Taylor
1778-1827. Foscolo, Ugo
1785-1873. Manzoni, Alessandro
1788-1824. Byron, George Noel Gordon, Lord

- 1790-1869. Lamartine, Alphonse de
1792-1822. Shelley, Percy Bysshe
1795-1821. Keats, John
1797-1856. Heine, Heinrich
1797-1863. Vigny, Alfred de
1798-1837. Leopardi, Giacomo
1802-1850. Lenau (Strehlenau, Nicolaus von)
1802-1885. Hugo, Victor
1809-1892. Tennyson, Alfred
1810-1857. Musset, Alfred de
1812-1889. Browning, Robert
1818-1894. Leconte de Lisle, Charles-Marie
1821-1867. Baudelaire, Charles
1822-1888. Arnold, Matthew
1835-1907. Carducci, Giosuè
1837-1909. Swinburne, Algernon Charles
1842-1898. Mallarmé, Stéphane
1842-1905. Heredia, José-Maria de
1844-1896. Verlaine, Paul
1854-1891. Rimbaud, Arthur
1860-1887. Laforgue, Jules

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INDEX

- Absalom and Achitophel*, 18
 Academy, Della Cruscan, 28
 Academy, French, 2, 4, 14
 "Ad Angelo Mai," 106, 224
 "Adler und Taube," 45
Adonais, 152, 166, 187, 221
Aeneid, 7; Dryden's translation, 24
 Aeschylus, 133, 154
 "A la colonne," 102
Alastor, 164, 166, 169
 Alembert, Jean d', 14
 Alexandrine, the, 6, 13, 18, 31, 37
 Alfieri, Vittorio, 30
 "Alla primavera," 57
 "Allerdings," 159
 "All' Italia," 106, 140
Andromaque, 5
 Annunzio, Gabriele d', 184
 "Archipelagus, Der," 137
 Ariosto, Lodovico, 26, 28
 Aristocracy, English, 17, 19, 25, 92,
 103; European, 16, 89, 112; French,
 1-2, 10-13, 96, 108, 114; German,
 31, 54, 57, 58, 66, 107
 Aristophanes, 154
 Aristotle, 4, 5, 8, 20, 33, 160
 Arnold, Matthew, 149-153, 232-234,
 120, 154, 165, 166, 179-180, 183,
 185, 189, 195, 230, 235, 236
Ars poetica, 8
Ars poetique (Boileau), 8; Dryden's
 version, 17; (Verlaine), 246
 "A Sylvia," 147, 224
Atalanta in Calydon, 154
Atta Troll, 107
 Augustanism, 3, 20, 25
 "Auld Lang Syne," 76
 "Aux arbres," 170
 "Aux modernes," 119-120
Ave atque Vale, 166
 "A Villequier," 234
 Ballad, 10, 26, 27, 35, 39, 40, 47, 63,
 77, 84
 Balzac, Honoré, 111
 Barrett, Elizabeth, 114
 "Bateau ivre," 209, 244
Baths of Lucca, The, 227
 Baudelaire, Charles, 236-240, 110, 118,
 184, 197, 199, 204-206, 209, 214,
 230, 232, 245, 248
 Beccaria, Cesare, 88, 191, 202
 Beethoven, Ludwig van, 89
 "Belle Dame sans Merci, La," 142, 195,
 222
 Bentham, Jeremy, 88, 191
Bérénice, 6
 Bergson, Henri, 162
 Berkeley, George, Bishop, 160
Birth of Tragedy, The, 114-115, 247
 "Bishop Bloughram's Apology," 203
 Blake, William, 77-81, 83, 84, 90, 187
 Blanc, Louis, 113, 116
 Blanqui, Louis-Auguste, 121
 Boccaccio, Giovanni, 28, 144
 Boileau-Despréaux, Nicolas, 3, 7, 8, 9,
 10, 16, 17, 20, 21, 150, 167, 196,
 246
Bonne Chanson, La, 242-243
 Botticelli, Sandro, 142
 Bouhours, Dominique, 7
 "Bouteille à la mer, La," 232
 "Bove, Il," 189
 Boyle, Robert, 191
Britannicus, 6
 "Brot und Wein," 138
 Browning, Robert, 114, 154, 184, 203,
 230

- "Bruto minore," 224
Bruto secondo, 30
 Burger, G. A., 194
 Burns, Robert, 74-76, 83, 84, 90, 91,
 94, 217
 Byron, Lord, 225-227, 100, 103, 105,
 108, 121, 124, 140-141, 166-167,
 169, 184, 196, 197, 202, 219, 228,
 230, 231, 232, 236

 Cabet, Étienne, 113
Cain, 197, 234
 "Canto notturno," 148, 225
Capital, 247
 Carducci, Giosuè, 107, 184, 189, 230
 Carlyle, Thomas, 114, 120
 Caylus, Anne-Claude, Count de, 133
 Charles II, 17, 18, 19
 Charles X, 110, 231
 Chateaubriand, René de, 15, 196
 Châtelet, Madame du, 12
Châtiments, *Les*, 121, 122, 123, 124
 Chatterton, Thomas, 27, 28, 217, 232
 Chaucer, Geoffrey, 18
 Chénier, André, 133
 "Chercheuses de poux, *Les*," 244
Childe Harold, 100, 140, 169
 "Christabel," 200
 Cicero, 223
 "Cinque maggio, *Il*," 101
 "Cloud, *The*," 188, 221
 Clough, Arthur Hugh, 120, 232
 Coleridge, Samuel Taylor, 83-84, 90,
 165, 172, 184, 195, 196, 199, 200,
 209, 216, 217, 218, 219, 220, 221,
 234
Conjectures on Original Composition,
 27, 39
 Constable, John, 185
Contemplations, *Les*, 123
 Corneille, Pierre, 3, 6, 16, 17
 "Coro di morti," 146-147
 Couplet, "heroic," 17, 18, 21, 23, 24,
 25
 Cowper, William, 81-83, 24, 84, 86, 88,
 171
 Crabbe, George, 94, 225
Cromwell, 108
 "Cry of the Children, *The*," 114

 Cuvier, Georges, 234

 Dante Alighieri, 26, 28, 29, 59, 81, 101,
 108, 144, 232, 234
 Darwin, Charles, 181, 183, 234, 248
 Darwin, Erasmus, 163
 Daumier, Honoré, 111
 Debussy, Claude, 199
Dei sepolcri, 106
 "Dejection," 217
 Delacroix, Eugène, 199
 Descartes, René, 3-4, 8, 9, 11, 16, 29,
 191
Deserted Village, The, 25
Deutschland, 107
 Dickens, Charles, 111
Dictionary, of French Academy, 4; of
 Della Cruscan Academy, 28
Discourse on Method, 3
 Disraeli, Benjamin, 113
Divine Comedy, The, 196
 "Djinns, *Les*," 199
Don Juan, 105, 140, 184, 228
 "Dover Beach," 235-236
 Dryden, John, 17-19, 21, 23, 24, 84,
 142
Dunciad, The, 24
Dynasts, The, 100

Ecclesiastical Sonnets, 201, 202
Eddas, Icelandic, 25, 35, 41
 "Einem Gemütskranken," 209-210
 "Einsamkeit," 177
 "Eins und Alles," 160
 "Einzige, *Der*," 139
Electricity and Magnetism, 211, 247
 "Elegy Wrote in a Country Church-
 yard," 25
Émile, 38, 88
Empedocles on Etna, 149-150
Encyclopædia, French, 14
 "Enfant perdu," 122-123
 English (language), 17, 18, 24, 32, 83,
 85, 94
Enoch Arden, 230
Epistle to Dr. Arbuthnot, 23
 "Erlkönig," 63, 194
Essay concerning the Human Under-

- standing*, 12
Essay on Criticism, An, 20, 32
Essay on Man, An, 22, 32, 171
 "Es war ein König im Thule," 47, 195
 Euripides, 5, 129, 151, 154
 "Eve of Saint Agnes, The," 200, 208
Excursion, The, 99, 162
- Fables* (La Fontaine), 7
Faust, 47, 199-200; earliest version, 55-57; *Fragment*, 67-70; Part One, 70-74; Part Two, 70n, 81, 133, 141
 Fichte, Johann, 134, 216
 "Fischer, Der," 63, 194
Fleurs du mal, Les, 209, 237-238
 "Forsaken Merman, The," 152, 195
 Foscolo, Ugo, 90, 106, 139, 140, 184
 Fourier, François, 112
 Fox, Charles James, 89, 95
 Frederick the Great, 31, 89, 194
 French (language), 2, 4, 16, 18, 23, 30, 31, 36, 108-110, 240-246
 French Empire, Second, 118
 "Frost at Midnight," 165
 "Für die Mouche," 229
- Galileo Galilei, 28, 106, 191
 Galvani, Luigi, 160
 "Ganymede," 47, 128
 "Geistliche Lieder," 201
Génie du christianisme, 196
 German (language), 31, 32, 35, 41, 42, 74, 129
 "Gesang der Geister über den Wassern," 60
 "Ginestra, La," 176, 179, 225
 "Goblin Market," 195
 Godwin, William, 93, 103, 162, 220
 Goethe, Johann Wolfgang, 36-74, 128-133, 158-160, 75, 79, 81, 84, 85, 88, 90, 91, 103, 134, 135, 137, 139, 173, 183, 184, 185, 190, 194, 195, 200, 207, 211, 216, 217, 227, 232, 233, 247
 Goldsmith, Oliver, 25, 95, 111
 "Götter Griechenlands, Die," 134
 "Göttliche, Das," 173
 Gottsched, Johann, 31, 33, 34, 36
Götz von Berlichingen, 48, 194
- Gray, Thomas, 25-26, 225
 "Grenzen der Menschheit," 60-63, 135
 Guizot, François, 115
- Haldane, J. B. S., 211
 Hamann, Johann Georg, 39, 42
Hamburg Dramaturgy, 33
Hamlet, 47, 48, 56
 Hardy, Thomas, 100
 "Harzreise im Winter," 60
 Hegel, Georg, 134
 Heine, Heinrich, 227-229, 61, 107, 113, 121, 139, 184, 195, 219, 230, 232, 234, 248
Heinrich von Ofterdingen, 161
Hellas, 220-221
 Helvétius, Claude, 12, 88
 Henri IV, 1, 17
 "Herbstgefühl," 53
 Herder, Johann Gottfried, 38-45, 47, 55, 56, 58, 63, 65, 66, 74, 88, 108, 127, 128, 130, 131, 134, 247
 Heredia, José de, 149
Hernani, 108-109
Heroides, 15
Hind and the Panther, The, 18
History of Art among the Ancients, 35, 127, 129
 Holbach, Paul, Baron d', 12, 161, 171, 192
 Holderlin, Friedrich, 134-139, 90, 100, 140, 154, 161, 184, 209, 216, 217, 220
 Holy Roman Empire, 31, 47, 48, 64
 Homer, 3, 8, 15, 20, 32, 41, 44, 127, 128, 130, 132, 141, 143, 150, 151
Homme machine, L', 12
 Hood, Thomas, 114
 Horace, 4, 8, 21
 Hugo, Victor, 102, 107, 108-109, 110, 114, 115, 117, 119, 120-124, 148, 168, 170, 171, 184, 185, 187, 197, 199, 207, 208, 230, 234, 235, 240, 241, 248
 Hume, Joseph, 192
 Huygens, Christiann, 191
 Huxley, Aldous, 174
Hymnen an die Nacht, 161, 200, 221
 "Hyperion," 143

- Ideas toward a Philosophy of Nature*, 161
- Iliad*, 14, 24, 132, 154
- Illuminations*, *Les*, 209, 245
- "Infinito, L'," 145, 206-207
- In Memoriam*, 166, 181-183, 203, 211, 234
- Inni sacri*, 201
- "Inno ai patriarchi," 176
- "Inside of King's College Chapel," 202
- "In Utrumque Paratus," 151-152
- "Invitation au voyage, L'," 199, 214-215
- Iphigenie auf Tauris*, 66, 129
- "Isabella," 184
- Italian Journey*, 129
- Italian (language), 28, 29, 30, 106, 107, 139, 144, 145
- James II, 19
- Jerusalem Delivered*, 28
- Jesuits, the, 3, 5, 223
- Joad, C. E. M., 212
- Jocelyn*, 114
- Johnson, Samuel, 24, 27
- "Jolly Beggars, The," 76
- Kant, Immanuel, 39, 42, 134
- Keats, John, 141-143, 103, 144, 148, 152, 164, 167, 184, 185, 187, 195, 200, 211, 219, 221-222
- "Kennst du das Land," 65
- Kepler, Johann, 191
- Kingsley, Charles, 113
- Klopstock, Friedrich Gottlieb, 32, 35, 37, 38, 196
- "Kubla Khan," 197, 199
- "Lac, Le," 167
- "Lady of Shalott, The," 195
- La Fontaine, Jean de, 8, 36
- Laforge, Jules, 249
- Lagrange, Joseph Louis, 191
- La Légende des siècles*, 123, 200
- "Lamia," 142, 222
- Language, *see* English, French, German
- Lamartine, Alphonse de, 108, 114, 116, 118, 119, 148, 168, 170, 184, 187, 201, 202, 203, 219, 241
- Lamennais, Hugues, 113, 114
- La Mettrie, Julien, 12
- La Motte, Houdar de, 13, 14
- Laplace, Pierre, 158, 191
- La Rochefoucauld, François de, 2
- Lavater, Johann, 77
- Lavoisier, Antoine, 191
- Leconte de Lisle, Charles-Marie, 115, 116, 118, 119, 148-149, 171, 184, 189, 197, 199, 207, 208, 230, 232, 248
- Leibnitz, Gottfried Wilhelm, 191
- Lenau, Nikolaus (von Strehlenau), 176-177, 184, 185, 209
- Leopardi, Giacomo, 106-107, 144-148, 223-225, 110, 156, 157-158, 160, 174, 175, 179, 180, 184, 185, 204, 206-207, 219, 227, 230, 231, 237
- Leroux, Pierre, 115
- Lessing, Gotthold Ephraim, 33-34, 35, 42
- "Lines Written in Kensington Gardens," 183
- Locke, John, 11, 12, 16, 22, 87, 88, 164, 192
- "Locksley Hall," 211
- Longinus, 21
- "Lorelei, Die," 63, 228
- Louis XIV, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 10, 11, 14, 17, 19, 20, 35, 37, 246
- Louis XV, 10, 31, 90, 236
- Louis XVI, 10, 93, 110
- Louis-Philippe, King, 110, 115, 118, 178, 231
- Lutrin*, *Le*, 7, 21
- Lycidas*, 152, 166
- Lyell, Sir Charles, 181
- Lyrical Ballads*, 83-85, 94, 95, 141, 162, 163
- Machiavelli, Niccolò, 106
- Macpherson, James, 26
- "Maison du berger, La," 115, 178-179, 231, 235
- Malherbe, François de, 8, 9, 241
- Mallarmé, Stéphane, 248, 249
- Malthus, Thomas, 102
- Manzoni, Alessandro, 101, 201
- Marat, Jean Paul, 113
- Marriage of Heaven and Hell, The*, 81

- Marx, Karl, 247, 248
 "Mask of Anarchy, The," 104-105
 Maurice, Frederick Denison, 113
 Maxwell, James Clerk, 211, 247
 Mazzini, Giuseppe, 124
Mécanique céleste, 158
Méditations poétiques, 108, 201
 "Memorial Verses," 165
 Mesmer, Friedrich, 161
 Metastasio (Pietro Trapassi), 29, 30
 Metternich, Clemens Wenzeslaus, Prince, 115
 Michelet, Jules, 114
 Michelangelo Buonarroti, 106, 144
 Middle class, English, 19-20, 32, 92, 111; European, 16, 230-232, 236, 237, 248; French, 4, 10, 232; German, 31, 32, 48, 54, 63; Italian, 29
 Mill, John Stuart, 211, 212
 Milton, John, 19-20, 22, 24, 32, 76, 81, 98, 121, 151, 196, 232, 234
Misanthropie, Le, 9
 "Mohamet's Song," 47
 "Moïse," 231
 Molière (Jean Baptiste Poquelin), 3, 8, 9, 16, 37, 108
 "Mont des Oliviers, Le," 235
 Montesquieu, Charles, Baron de, 12, 13, 89, 191
Moral Maxims, 2
 "Mort du loup, La," 186, 231
 Murray, Gilbert, 145, 154
Musarion, 32
 Musset, Alfred de, 168, 201, 202, 241

 Napoleon I, 100-102, 16, 30, 91, 97, 98, 99, 106, 107, 115, 121, 136, 137, 170, 198, 230
 Napoleon III (Louis-Napoleon), 117, 118, 120, 121, 123, 148, 171
New Principles of Political Economy, 112
 Newton, Isaac, 11-12, 16, 22, 29, 160, 161, 162, 191
 Nietzsche, Friedrich, 128, 154-155, 247, 248
Night Thoughts, 76
 "Noble style," 4, 18, 33, 108-109
Nordsee, Der, 139
 Novalis (Hardenberg, Friedrich von), 161, 200-202, 203, 216, 217, 221, 222
 "Nuits de juin," 188-189

 "Oceano nox," 115, 230
 "Ode on a Grecian Urn," 142, 148
 "Ode on the Intimations of Immortality," 188, 218-219
 "Ode to a Nightingale," 103, 187, 221
 "Ode to Duty," 218
 "Ode to the West Wind," 103, 221
Odyssey, 24, 40, 130, 132
 "Old Man Traveling," 163
On the World-Soul, 160
Organization of Labor, 113
Orientales, Les, 199
Origin of Species, The, 180, 247
 Ossian, 26, 39, 40, 41, 225
Othello, Vigny's translation, 108
 Ovid, 15, 131
 Owen, Robert, 113n
 "Ozymandias," 103

Paradise Lost, 19, 81, 196
Paradise Regained, 32
 Parini, Giuseppe, 30, 106
 Pascal, Blaise, 191
 Percy, Thomas, Bishop, 26, 35, 39, 40, 194
 Perrault, Charles, 14
Persian Letters, 13
 Pestalozzi, Johann Heinrich, 88
 Petrarch, 26, 28, 144, 223
 Pindar, 26, 41, 45, 127, 128, 135, 137
 Physiocrats, the, 171
 Plato, 134, 160, 166, 216
Poèmes antiques, 119, 148, 199
Poèmes barbares, 119
Poetics (Aristotle), 7, 20, 33
Political Justice, 93, 162
 Pope, Alexander, 20-24, 27, 32, 76, 84, 171, 184
 Poussin, Nicolas, 185
Prelude, The, 92, 164-165
 Priestley, Joseph, 88, 191
Princess, The, 199, 231
Principles of Geology (Lyell), 181
Principia mathematica, 12
 "Prisoner of Chillon, The," 166
 "Prometheus," 48-52, 60, 128

- Prometheus Unbound*, 103, 104
Proudhon, Pierre-Joseph, 113
- "Quaïn," 119, 197-198
"Quiete dopo la tempesta, La," 106, 147, 174
Quinet, Edgar, 114
- Racine, Jean, 5-7, 3, 8, 10, 13, 16, 17, 19, 23, 94, 129, 150
Rape of the Lock, The, 22, 32
Rapin, René, 7, 20
"Recueillement," 239
Reform Act, of 1832, 110; of 1867, 124, 247
Religio laici, 18
Reliques of Ancient English Poetry, 26, 194
"Reniement de Saint Pierre, Le," 118
"Réponse à une acte d'accusation," 241
Republic, the Third French, 124
"Resolution and Independence," 217-218
"Réversibilité," 238
Revolution, American, 89; English, of 1688, 20; French, of 1789, 66, 89-92, 111, 135, 139; French, of 1830, 110; French, of 1848, 115-118
Revolution, Industrial, 96, 99, 111, 112, 212, 230
"Rhein, Der," 137-138
"Ricordanze, Le," 147, 224
"Rime of the Ancient Mariner, The," 84, 195
Rimbaud, Arthur, 244-246, 207, 209, 213-214, 230, 247
Robespierre, Maximilien, 93, 94, 113, 114
Rolla, 202
Römische Elegien, 131
Ronsard, Pierre de, 8
Rossetti, Christina, 195
Rousseau, Jean-Baptiste, 14
Rousseau, Jean-Jacques, 12, 15, 39, 42, 88, 112, 127, 134, 171
Rules, critical, 8, 10, 20, 21, 32, 33
Russell, Bertrand, 212
"Ruth," 174
- "Sabato del villaggio, Il," 106, 147
"Saint Mark's Eve," 185, 200
Saint-Simonians, the, 112, 115
Sainte-Beuve, Charles, 231
Salons, the, 1, 2, 5, 10, 107
Samson Agonistes, 19-20, 151
Sand, George (Madame Aurore Dudevant), 114, 117
Schelling, Friedrich von, 134, 160, 161, 176, 216
"Schicksalslied," 135-136
"Schiffsjunge, Der," 177
Schiller, Friedrich, 89, 131, 132, 134, 136, 183, 195, 216
Schliemann, Heinrich, 139, 247, 248
Science, 12, 13, 16, 17, 22, 29, 38, 86, 87, 158-163, 171, 180-183, 189-194, 195, 203, 207, 210-212, 216, 220, 224, 225, 231, 232, 233, 234, 247-248
"Scots Wha Hae," 91
Scott, Walter, 194, 225, 230
"Sensitive Plant, The," 184
Sepolcri, I, 139
"Sera di un dí di festa, La," 145
Shakespeare, William, 17, 22, 32, 33, 35, 41, 42, 44, 76, 83, 85, 108, 129, 150, 231
Shelley, Percy Bysshe, 100, 101, 103, 104, 105, 124, 164, 166, 168, 169, 171, 184, 187, 208, 219, 220-221, 222, 232
Sismondi, Jean, 112
"Skylark, To a," 221
"Small Celandine, The," 187
Smith, Adam, 171, 191
Social Contract, The, 88
Socialism, 112-117
Socrates, 34, 47
Sobrab and Rustum, 150
"Soleils couchants," 187-188
"Song of the Shirt, The," 113
"Song to the Men of England," 104-105
Songs before Sunrise, 124
Songs of Experience, 77-81
Songs of Innocence, 77-78
"Sonnenuntergang," 135
Sophocles, 127, 128, 129, 137, 150, 151, 232
"Souvenir," 168
Spengler, Oswald, 42

- Spenser, Edmund, 27, 77
Stimmen der Völker, 63
 "Strayed Reveller, The," 151
 Sue, Eugène, 114
 Surrealist School, the, 246
 Swedenborg, Emanuel, 77
 Swinburne, Algernon Charles, 124-125,
 154, 166, 230, 249
 Symbolist School, the, 246, 248
Système de la nature, 12, 259
- "Tam o'Shanter," 75
Task, The, 82
 Tasso, Torquato, 28, 66
 Tennyson, Alfred, 114, 152, 166, 180-
 183, 184, 189, 195, 199, 203, 207,
 211, 230, 234, 235
 Thackeray, William Makepeace, 111
 Theocritus, 128, 133, 147
*Thoughts on the Imitation of the
 Greeks*, 34, 129
Thyrsis, 152, 166
 "Tintern Abbey, Lines Written above,"
 84
 "Tithonus," 153
 "To an Independent Preacher," 180, 185
 "To a Skylark," 221
 "To Autumn," 188
Torquato Tasso, 66
 Toland, John, 192
 "Tristesse d'Olympio," 168
Trophées, Les, 149
 Turgot, Anne-Robert, 12
 "Two Voices, The," 203
- Uhland, Johann, 195
 "Ultimo canto di Saffo, L'," 145
- Une Saison en enfer*, 245, 247
 "Urwald, Der," 176
- Verlaine, Paul, 230, 239, 241-243, 244,
 246
Vestiges of Creation, 181
 Vigny, Alfred de, 231-232, 107, 108,
 114, 115, 118, 178-180, 186, 196,
 197, 219, 230, 235, 237, 248
 Virgil, 3, 8, 18, 20, 30, 129
Virgil's Works, Dryden's translation, 18
Vision of Judgment, The, 105
 Volta, Alessandro, 161
 Voltaire (François-Marie Arouet), 10,
 12, 13, 14, 23, 24, 88, 192, 194, 201,
 202, 213
 Voss, Johann, 132
- "Waldlieder," 186-187
 "Wandrer's Nachtlid," 59
Werther, 48, 54
 Whitehead, Alfred North, 162
Wilhelm Meister, 63, 65, 132
 Winckelmann, Johann, 34-35, 37, 38,
 42, 65, 126, 127, 128, 129, 130, 134,
 139, 144, 148, 155
 Wieland, Christopher, 32, 33, 37, 41
 "Wie wenn am Feiertage," 138
Words of a Believer, 113
 Wordsworth, William, 92-99, 161-166,
 217-219, 83-86, 87, 90, 103, 105,
 108, 110, 121, 124, 169, 172, 174,
 176, 180, 183, 187, 190, 201, 204,
 208, 212, 213, 216, 220, 232, 234
- Young, Edward, 27, 39, 76, 171